

BAKOUR

***DEVIL***  
***IN ME***

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*Translated into English from Armenian by HACHATOOR*

The novel deals with today's life in its multilateral manifestations. The principal character is dualized. One continues living as a prose writer, recording the events witnessed by his double, while the other one carrying a demon inside, can see the events taking place on earth: killing peaceful protestors by government troops, corruption, moral degradation, he takes part in secret governmental meetings and committees (BK-3, MJ12) at the scale of the Universe, shows concern about the currently projected global disasters, about conflicts between nations, about problems disturbing the contemporary civilization, viz.: using photosynthesis in place of nuclear and oil energy carriers or establishing connection with the microscopic world.

The book's active personi are specific people living today. To achieve vivid perception, the author oftentimes reverts to grotesque, allegoric or abstract presentation, which are however mostly prompted by the context.

## CHAPTER 1

### A YEREVAN-LIKE AMERICA

Tried to yell, call out, ask someone for help. He would never know, no one would hear, for the voice would stay in the throat. As to why he should have chosen that house in the whole United States of America, he would ignore it himself. He could only feel as if some unknown one would push, nudge him to that house, where, as became known, there was a sickly and madcap girl. There was an inner voice reminding, that he was a visitor to the house. Who reminded and of what, there was no idea.

The apartment showed no association with the American life.

- But where is the girl? - asked the lady of the house, a tall lanky woman. Seeing her long fingers, he thought that in her young years she must have been a basketball player with some American university team.

- The devil took her, - she replied looking depressed and concerned, and then added: often does, torturing the poor madcap girl for his pleasure.

- Gracious God..., Ben raised his hands.

At that moment there was a movement in the bed. It was a man with hairy chest, curly hair and sunken eyes on an oval-shaped face. He looked at Ben spitefully. If he is a demon, why don't I see the horns? - thought Ben. One of Ben's friends, yes, perhaps it was Vazgen, was convinced that the demons trim

their horns. He never said how he had come to know it. Later Ben learned by accident that he had taken part in secret meetings of Satanists. The curly one got up making a threatening move towards Ben. He was in casual clothes and the red stripes drawn over the trousers were missing in places. On the table was a long kitchen knife, left behind by the hostess, perhaps deliberately. Ben jerked rapidly and made a move in its direction. Tried to yell again, but nothing came out. Perhaps something is wrong with the vocal cords. But then wasn't he talking to the hostess a little while ago? He even heard his own voice. The demon, of course, if he was indeed the demon, or else, how do you know what is going on in the world, without taking a note of the knife, perhaps ignoring what it was, quickened his step. Maybe he thought that Ben would prevent him from torturing the girl. "Do whatever you like", I will never go against you", - thought Ben. He passed easily the obstacle of the big knife and of the hand, ...was lost inside Ben.

"You can see now why no one has actually seen the devil, - thought Ben, - he is simply in us. Getting in and using us to control the world of man. And I used to think how it was that there was so much devilry in man. Strangely, the way I look may have been changed a bit as well".

He scanned the room. No mirror.

- Why, the Americans seem to find no use for mirrors.

The Americans have nothing to do here, - said the hostess, she seemed to be taller than a little while ago, - the devil has no liking for mirrors.

- I know nothing about it, - said Ben, - but how can girls live without looking in the mirror?

- I can see no use in a mirror, growled the hostess in place of an answer.

- Oh, yes, - grumbled Ben, the madcap girl may well not take interest in her looks. Just let me see, what he looks like, the devil.

- Didn't you see him right now?

- Couldn't make it, he was quicker than hell, - said Ben in a guilty tone.

It is always so, - said the hostess, I have said it a hundred times, let people see your face, let them recognize you. Such a renowned creature, and no one has seen him in any decent way, or rather, has had time enough.

- You too..., - said Ben, looking for horns or bulges in the hostess' bush of hair.

- No artist has ever created a right image of the devil.

- Haven't they all got it from the same place?

- They got it from the Bible.

- But the madcap girl...

- She does not meet the satanic requirements.

- Did I meet them? asked Ben, surprised.

- Well, but...

- Why was I picked up?

- No one picked you up. You just seemed dangerous, he decided to neutralize you from the inside, or perhaps it was a decision by the Big Committee.

- It is strange, but I am the most harmless creature in the world of man.

- You bet, but the country President said you were extremely dangerous. He, too...

- Our President... what a calamity... Who could have imagined!

- It was us who were the majority of voters...

- What a calamity...

- And now you are one of us, too.

- What a calamity.

That is how they get into people and confuse the servants of God. Otherwise what was the use in the years of the Inquisition to burn or torture to death so many innocent people? It seems that the devil could always manage to get out in time and find refuge inside another man. And perhaps quite often the persons they chose were men of high position in church or state. Ben thought that he could now find out who were the men possessed by the devil. He has become one of those now. Perhaps in the first place one had to see the country President. Or else, the

President of a small Armenia, no matter what type of devil he may carry inside, will hardly be able to change the world. In an article related to the events in Iraq and Iran some analyst referred to the previous American President as "the devil". They say the President read it and smiled with satisfaction. However, the journalists never made it a focus of their particular attention.

Why he read that kind of articles and poked his nose into all things, he did not know himself. First of all it had to be sorted out, what changes he incurred following the entry. "Damn it, no mirror in this America, what kind of a country is it, - thought Ben, - indeed, it was taken away by the devil. Who brought me to this country? I had been coming to the house of my daughter Sona, but was obviously brought to another place. Setbacks and health disorders pursued Sona's family right along. Now the husband gets it, then she herself, then the five-year old Alex. There must have been some evil power entering the house, without ever intending to leave.

The devil. Of course, it is him, the devil. But why did he target the family of his next of kin? What has he got to do with them? Now, why did he come and settle here? He put out a knife, too, the accursed one, got inside. What if that is the way he is hiding from those who chase him? That is how he managed to evade being punished by God. If he, Ben, is a chosen one by God, then damn it, He will spare him, if he strikes him, he will not be killed along with him. So, he is per se more valuable for God than the devil, his eternal enemy. Of course, it is yet to be seen, whether the devil is really an enemy or an agent, to establish a confrontation.

- Look, that woman, she doesn't want to be seen here, - at the bed where there was the devil a little while ago, someone spoke in a husky voice.

But the devil came into Ben right now. So, he can stay inside Ben and also in bed, talk husky and terrify the household to death. So, it was an illusion, the entry into Ben? But Ben saw and felt it, didn't he? He came in and was lost inside. All parts of the body are in pain yet. There were some astute, incomprehensible pains, the likes of which Ben had never felt.

There is a drawing pain in the bones.

God knows what is going on in this America. A strange country. He had heard it, read it, but it was what he could have never imagined.

There was a knock on the door. As if it were a modern country, everything digitalized, but go figure, no bell at the door.

- Who is it? - cried the hostess.

- It's Blanch, let her in, Srbik, I called her, cried from another room the madcap girl who Ben had never seen.

But a little time ago the hostess said the girl was not in. What it was all about, Ben could not sort out at all.

Don't let her in, - called out the husky voice.

- Margik has called her, replied the hostess, it's Blanch, why should this woman scare you so?

- I am afraid, - grated the husky voice, that instead of her someone, - open, let her in, see what I'll do to her.

- I'll bury your head, yesterday the priest showed you a cross, so you got into burrow.

- Why, did I get into a burrow? You know, I am a half-Christian.

- You bet, half-Christian...

The knock on the door was louder than before.

- Coming... - Blanch opened the door, - O, Srбуhi, didn't know it was you, - blowing false kisses.

Middle height, neither fat, nor slim, with a white bunch of hair, a skirt such as used to be in fashion in the 60s, striped leggings up to her knees.

- O, it reeks of the devil in your house, said Srbik coming in.

The husky-voiced man camouflaged himself. On the far side of the bed there was a black curtain with an embroidered hexagram. Ben was aware that it was the Buffomet's sign of goat head inside with the horns sticking out beyond the limits of the star: The woman named Srbik withdrew the curtain and there was a heavy ornamented table with the husky-voiced man sitting behind it. He was a man about 60, with a drawn face, shaved head with many potholes.

- Doctor Anton Lavey, alias "Black Padre" of the demons, -

cried out Srbik, - what are you doing here, have you invented another "Black gospel"? What is it with you, I haven't recognized your voice, have you caught cold?

- Here is Jane Mansfield, alias Srбуhi, a black magic star. Again preaching your black magic against the naive people? - said the husky voice.

Prior to that Ben had heard about Lavey and his theory from Vasgen, the Web designer at his office.

- Look, Lavey, I have mentioned, haven't I, that I have suffered two clinical deaths, so that Jane has been wiped out from my life, is it so difficult to understand? I am Srбуhi, and when God sent me back from the other world for the second time, saying that I had yet a mission among the people in the world, pulling a channel of light behind me in case I wanted to come back, and fetch along whoever I pleased, see, hell's bells, now I see and feel all things.

- Satan is a symbol, nothing more, - said the skinhead doctor, - he also symbolizes love to every earth dweller, rejecting the image of the crucified Christ.

- Don't touch Christ, understand? Or else, I'll curse you, you will never make it out of hell. How many times did they hex you? Shall I tell you where the charm is so that you believe what I say? I am not standing in your way, on the contrary, I want to help, here, there is a black label in the lining of your jacket. It reads: "Satanic death...". If you remove the note and destroy it, the curse will remain. I will have to remove the curse, only I, your satanic rituals will not help, since as of today, there is no one stronger than me.

- OK, Srbik, I know what a trickster you are. Everyone knows it these days, said the doctor.

- Hey, you are up to your old games again, there is no trick at all, just look it up in the lining of your jacket. Srbik waited till doctor would grope for the pack.

- Got it, then open it and read, you will see that they hexed you, so you get sick and die a painful death.

- Listen, said the doctor, and Ben noticed traces of anxiety in his voice, - you don't mess with me. You used to be a beautiful



actress, the pride of Los' male population, and now what? A simple witch. Blow your whistle on someone else, as to the label in the lining, I will find the planter and punish him. That is to say, I know who done it now. Just wait, the devil will come, he will expose your quackery to the world.- Listen, no more mixing me with your sex bombs, your devil will better take your pictures first for the world to see how many hidden horns you got. So, bring down your devil, I will cure him, make him into a man. Please, know that the angels made a hex on him two thousand years ago. Only me knows the place it is hidden. Well, well, Nero...

- Again written in Armenian?

- Well, no, Old Hebrew.

- Mashtots had yet to be born then.

- You are a short-minded man, if you are deaf to the word of God, perhaps you could ask Satan, he would tell you everything. Old Armenian has a history of seven thousand eight hundred and twenty six years.

- You bet, the horns.

- Corns grow on the head of your devil. With so much trouble that you have, writing books about him, still no signs of corns on your head.

- What we got is not corns, it is horns.

Ha, how is it that until now I haven't seen the difference between corns and corns, ha-ha-ha!, said Srbik laughing aloud, but then, catching a glimpse of Ben, said, yah, Ben, haven't recognized you, the TV said you were in America, I couldn't believe, you were going to open an exhibition. All over the Internet your daughter is looking for you, saying: "My father has been kidnapped by the demons"

- Well, I don't know, - Ben said with a shrug, - I have been brought here by the one lying in bed. Had there been a computer at least, I could have sent an answer to my daughter. We are cut off from the world. No mirror, no computer ... Could you help me getting to her?

- I can, if you show me her photo.

- It must be in my handbag, where is it, o, man, had a bag, didn't I, what a country...

- OK, no need. I will see her in your eyes. She came up, staring straight in Ben's eyes, started back for a moment in horror, - devil, devil, devil... in you, Satan, scared, trying to stay in hiding.

Srbik grabbed her own collar with her hands and pulled it so that metal buttons were sent jingling on the floor. Popping out of her dress were rounded and fluffy breasts. In her time she used to be indeed number one sex bomb of Los Angeles. Who could think that this barrel-like woman could possess such beautiful breasts...“, - thought Ben before addressing Srbik.

- What are you doing?

- You better keep mum, - said Srbik, - Why did you let the devil in?

- I have brandished a knife, but...

- I will deal shortly with him now, - said the sorceress starting to rummage for something in the cleavage between her breasts while trying to ensure that the eyes of the doctor shouldn't miss any tremors of the breasts that in former times had driven the black scientist crazy. - My eye! Where is my cross? she started digging in her handbag, - oh, yes, in the bus someone thrust his hand in my bosom. I thought it was with good intentions... So, he pulled out the cross with a chain. She stepped aside from the bed, the place where the husky voice came from, - doctor Lavey, my cross was stolen by your people, Anton, let me have it right now, or I'll make it a curse, and you know the power of my curses.

- Here is the picture of my girl, - said Ben.

- This is not the right time, cut off Srbik.

- The city is teeming with pickpockets, all kinds of pilferers, - said doctor, - I have nothing to do with those, besides, you must tell a thief from a seducer. One pawing your fancy tits will make you swoon.

- You know my weakness. You, too, used to say there was no match in the world to my tits.

- None, but Pamela...

- Here are your men, only give them the pumped up silicon ones, the natural won't do.

Srbik picked up the photo,

- What is she like... I see hexes in the house, in a pillow, in bed, in a jacket, my God, so many, "a black label", too, let us go and get your girl, get her and open the labels. She turned to Ben, dear boy, why should you have anything to do with those demons?

- Again starting her swindling, - said doctor Lavey in a husky voice, - wrapping this poor man into her nets.

- Shut up, the shameless, - attacked Srbik.

- And what is your part in it, - Ben turned up to Srbik.

- That is my specialty. I know how to win with them. Can't you see the way the principal Satan's brainwasher coiled up in front of me? Because he used to be my lover in younger years. Cheated and never married, - then became doctor Lavey, - be damned you, be damned, you spoiled this lovely country, perverted the people.

- The country went wrong itself, - answered the husky voice, - it had been wrong from the start, because instead of the real life you prefer spiritual illusions; instead of the unblemished wisdom what is adopted is falsehood and deception. Instead of the trusteeship of mentally sick vampires I suggest responsibility...

- Hey, you haven't changed, but have become even more boring in your stupidity. It was the likes of you that have made a monster out of this country.

- What monster? - asked Ben, failing to understand anything at all.

- Inspired satanic ideas into people, said Srbik, - thrown nuclear bombs from airplanes.

- Something that happened sixty years ago... I thought you were going to say something serious; this man has got nothing to do with it.

- The chain reaction has been discovered using this type of men.

- Then why did you let him have his wishes?

- I would bury them, do you think it is easy to go against their racket? Thousands of people like you have settled inside, while

the angels can do nothing to get them so as to take revenge, to free Planet Earth from them. Look out, never tell anyone that there is a demon inside you.

- Why not tell?

- They will believe it and strike, killing you to boot.

- Most killings are done this way.

- Sure. If one day they held a pistol on you, you would think you were going to be squandered, but in actual fact no one would give a damn about you, it is the other feller inside you that goes to waste. You are just an innocent victim. Here I will tuck in the black labels in their beds, in the pillows, let them suffer, they will never know where it comes from.

- What about my daughter?

- Oh, well, there is a girl here, that's why I came. Hello, Margoosh, are you here? won't I see how you are, if any, are you still holding against this demon?

- Ho, did I hear you say something? - the yelling voice of the crazy girl answered from the second floor, - you promised to find the hex, did you find anything on me?

- Your hexes, my sweet baby, will be taken care of by the Devil and his chief spokesman.

- Why so? They are next of kin to me. They provide me with bread and water.

- Yah, the rest of your needs is also taken care of willingly.

- What of it, they are up to the mark, see, they gave them an order.

- Who will give them an order? I will hex them - all orders will be recalled. Remember how they took away General Samo's decorations? It was me who did the hexing.

- Why should you meddle with the political affairs? What if General Samo should know and show you the hell?

- How will he know?

- Drops in from time to time. Doctor's old pal.

- Good. Srbik, dear, we better go...- suggested Ben.

- Yes, coming. Oh, girl, this man is sticking, doesn't go loose.

- Why then did you bring him here?

- Me? He was here when I came.

- Jesus Christ...

There was a knock at the door.

- Hey, girl, open the door, see who it is.

The newcomer was Ben's daughter, a vivid petite of 30, she examined the room ignoring Ben.

- Sona, you looking for me?

- You? No, who are you? I am looking for my father, got an SMS that he was here.

- Your father is me, - said Ben with uncertainty.

- You are not my father, - declared Sona decidedly.

- One of them has either gone round the bend, or is a disclaimer and a liar, - said Srbik.

- So, it is you who planted the hex so that the next of kin wouldn't recognize one another.

- I have not enough trouble of my own that I should pack the jinx on the poor.

- You do it on the rich to bleed them, don't you?

- The rich, I'd pluck their eyes, those that get rich, but who will foot the bill?

- The impoverished, - said Ben, - because the system of income distribution is deficient.

- True, - said Srbik, turning to Sona, - have you recognized your father now? The matter is, an event has occurred, I wonder if it is worthwhile to talk about it.

- Well, go on, speak out.

- Your father, just an hour ago the devil came into his body, transforming him so that no one would recognize him. But now I am going to make a jinx pack and drive Satan away, only give me a little money.

- How much?

- On the way from Moscow, when they take me to kill the jinx, they say five thousand. As to the devil, o...

- So expensive?

My dear, I am giving you back your father. Well, half a greenback will do, I too have a conscience.

- That fifty is on me, - said Ben.

- No, - interfered doctor Lavey, - I am giving a hundred, only take her away. As soon as the devil comes, he doesn't like quacks, he will finish her off.

- The devil does not like devilry? - returned Sona, - but they have always taught us...

- His enemies have made up a misunderstanding, all types of quackery and deception has become associated with his name, said doctor, - In the Bible, Adam and Eve were taught wisdom by Satan, as witnessed by the Holy Book, the first ever school was established by Satan against the will of God, teaching morality, justice, wisdom, and truth. Meanwhile, the Apostles made a beast of Satan in order to glorify themselves in their letters, showing him as the origin of evil, so as to make themselves look good. In actual fact, Satan is a symbol of freedom, self-development, informed selfishness. He symbolizes our love to every earthman and rejects the image of a crucified Christ.

-And the society? - asked Ben, - Christianity was the basis forming the new civilization, do you deny that, too?:

- As regards the laws, I agree, those laws were necessary, - replied the founder of the Satanism theory, - but the church as a structure has been transformed into a bureaucratic system:

- That is another pair of shoes, said Ben, - that resulted from the development of civilization and its requirements.

- The church is imposing dogmas and rules upon the society and the people irrelevant of the ways of life and the nature of man, explained the doctor, - It is against the plans by the creator and nature. Man must live free. Satan offers man to accept all the sins denied by the church if they contain physical, mental or emotional pleasures.

- But in case the church will become more flexible through reforms?

- It will never agree, for it will collapse. What we suggest is a complete freedom.

- What you want is chaos. Who is your number one wizard?

- Number one is Zarathustra.

- But he was born for his epoch, or rather it was the epoch

that presented him to the society, as later Christianity was imposed.

- That's what I say, Christianity does not meet today's requirements. Man has attained a level to arrive at his pagan roots. This is a precondition of development.

- I don't think so, - said Ben, then, turning to Srbik and Sona:  
, - shall we go?.

- Our principal commandment: "do no folly", we preach free life, with no prejudices, - ignoring Ben's suggestion continued Anton Lavey, - what you have inside, live and do accordingly, understand?

- And what do you say about the existence of netherworld?

- Satanism denies it.

- Because it is of Christian origin.

- Not only that. Had you partaken in sessions of the Trapezoid Order that we have established, I think, you would have gone over to our side. I can introduce you to Peter Gilmore, the High Priest.

- Better go first to the Temple of Seth, - said Blanch.

- I must alert Michael, - said doctor Lavey.

- You have revived god Seth of the hell of Old Egypt.

- That only shows our roots to be much deeper.

- The roots of Christianity proceed from Old Egypt, India, Judea and China. They also made use yet of another civilization that had been lost leaving no traces.

- I wonder if you could mean the Armenians? It is them that are talking about a civilization of seven millennia.

- No, no, I will talk about the Anglo-Saxons.

- Yes, two thousand years ago they grabbed what came in handy.

- All things that met the needs of the time, ventured Ben as a correction to the doctor's remark.

- Hurry up, dad; said Sona, I left the kids all alone.

- We shall meet again, said doctor.

- No chance, - answered Srbik.

- Stay put, - said doctor, - I mean Benjamin, sorry, Ben.

- So do I, said Srbik.

- What is the difference, Ben or Benjamin, - asked Ben or Benjamin.

- I know that you are Ben. You get it in your nut. That has been decided.

- Decided? Great guns! They choose a name for me! In that case, who is Benjamin?

- The time will come for you to know.

The hostess opened the door, Ben, Sona and Srbik stepped outside.

- Thank God, we came off clear from Satan's house, said Ben, who was scanning the street in bewilderment. Everything was reminiscent of Yerevan. True, there were changes, but nothing American. Strangely, perhaps the newly arrived Armenians through nostalgia had built a town corner resembling Yerevan. Sona, you must have been at the seaside, when did you come back?

- Father, my grandmother died, didn't she?

- Yes, my girl, she did, unfortunately, we buried her in your absence.

- I remember it all.

- Of course.

- We are now in Yerevan.

Ben's attention was attracted by a black dog sprawling on the sidewalk. Perhaps from sleepless nocturnal roaming, from useless and cruel fighting, too strenuous for a she-dog, she was tired after the fighting, and had no mood to move away. Ben was walking towards the dog, thinking: "When passing by, she will attack without warning; there will be no time to jump aside or to kick on the mug". However, the black dog, inoffensively, even with no anger, looked at Ben, as if assessing his intentions, or at least the amount of evil accumulated in him, then she got up and moved aside with no hurry. The intent gaze was fixed at Ben every single moment. The eyes flared for a moment. A strange fear passed through Ben's body. It was unclear, whether it was from fear that she gave up her place, or by some unknown reason it was a feeling of respect, seemed to be the only



creature in town to have respect for him. Ben firmly believed that no man would cede him his sitting place. Two days before while commuting with bags, he looked into some young men's eyes. They evaded the eye contact and stayed rooted to their seats. But when a half-naked girl stepped into the bus, the young men sprang up to offer their seats. The girl, her breasts nearly open, pulled aside and motioned to Ben to share her seat. Ben looked one moment at the girl's face and was petrified with surprise. He had long forgotten that face. It was very familiar and closely related. When or where he had seen it, he couldn't tell. Or rather, he kept the memory at bay, avoiding the truth.

Remembered the dog's glinting eyes.

Black dog.

The devil.

My God.

And the devil in him.

The devil yielding to the devil.

His heart raced. As if there was not air enough to breathe.

The dog had looked, had seen him in Ben and yielded the place.

Having passed ten steps at most, there was a sharp sound of impact from behind followed by a heart-rending whine and a sharp squealing of brakes. The black dog, drawing slightly her hind legs, moved towards the brushwood. A young driver emerged from the Mercedes, examined the bumper; detecting no damage and ignoring the dog, he slid on along the street.

A specific selection was underway in the city streets. The careless and traffic-unminded dogs got run over by cars. Staying alive and reproducing their own kind were only the smart dogs. Meanwhile, the devil, who, according to Ben, was in the dog, could not alert the dog about the approaching car. Of course, people, too, sometimes go into deep thought and get run over while passing the street. Though the devil might have already got out of the dog before that moment, the dog could not have yet woken up following the devilish stupefaction.

Will the devil show leniency to the Mercedes driver?

Ben followed the dog. The same black dog. A child wanted

to help the dog, but didn't know what to do. Started to stroke. Under the fingers of the child the dog stopped whining. Gathering round the dog were the neighborhood children. After a little while the same car made its way back. Ben thought that the driver had at least to be advised to drive with caution. The dog raised its head and had a look at the car. The car swerved for a moment from the road and smashed against a pole. People rushed to the crashed car. Ben thought that the driver would this time, too, get out to see if any damage was done to the car. However, the driver remained with his face drenched in blood on the steering wheel.

To the surprise of the kids, the black dog got up from its place and walked away quietly, as if nothing had happened.

The three had to cross the street. Ben stayed behind thinking about the dog, Satan, and the dead driver. A car with headlights on blew its horn and suddenly headed towards Ben who had nearly reached the sidewalk. Despite his delayed reaction to the car horn he came to himself and took a leap to the sidewalk.

- Low creature, you won't go far in this way, - said Ben.

The car hardly rolled fifty meters when it slammed into a tree. The door opened, and a breathless body of the driver was thrown out.

- Strange things... I have nothing to do with it, thought Ben trying to justify himself.

- Do you admit now to being in Yerevan? - asked Sona.

- Sona dear, I have spent a whole night in an airplane, the stewardess was your classmate, I think Harsik was the name, wasn't it?

- Hasmik, corrected Sona.

- OK, Hasmik, I remember. She offered cognac, I declined. You know, I have a headache from booze. Next to me was a German, I told him my impressions of Germany. He was emotional. We found common contacts: Wolf Birmann, a poet and singer from the Resistance, Adolf Dresen, artistic director of the Berlin Opera, Rolf Shelikeyn, he liked you, remember, was his partner, they worked together in the Greens Party. Against

who, what for, he himself doesn't know.

- How could it be, father?

- Oh, no, he knew, he was an antiglobalist.

- Did you get the name? - asked Srbik, who never let go of Sona.

- Whose name?

- The German, your travelling companion. Did he have horns?

- I didn't pay attention. He was tousled. No, no, his head was shaven. The shaven head could be seen from under the wig. The name, if I am not mistaken, was Lavelstein.

- It was he who was the devil, you saw the doctor in that house, it was he, said Srbik, - if I were with you I would sort it out at once. It was he who brought you to that house, wasn't he?

- It seems as if it were he... - answered Ben thoughtfully.

- Listen, stop poisoning dad with your devil, go and do your jinx, said Sona.

- What do you say, Sona, dear, your friend Astrik asked me to come to your house and open the jinx that are there. Well, I cannot let your enemies tear you to pieces, can I? God has given me this gift, perhaps only three persons in the world are like me. One, they say, is in China, one in Africa.

- Dad, can you see now that we are in Yerevan, said Sona leaving Srbik unanswered; you have not flown to any America.

- No, nothing of the kind, what is it, can't I see when we are in America? The Statue of Liberty, it was seen at night. But it was clever of the Armenians, wasn't it, to build up this corner of America as if it were in Yerevan. It is unsafe, though, for migrants will never from now on return to Armenia. Yerevan, they moved it to America. Sakes alive! Come and look at those Armenians! Who could ever think them to be capable of things like that!

- Dad, your air travel, it was a dream.

- What, are we asleep now?

- No, we are not dreaming, it is hard life.

- What about doctor Lavey's apartment, his crazy daughter, misused by the devil, Satan getting inside me...

- There was the doctor, true, admitted Sona.
- You see!
- However, no Satan could have ever gotten inside you.
- Strange enough, when you were a little girl, you were more easily persuaded.

They came home, and Ben was stunned to see the house walls, the bush of roses in the courtyard, the faces of the next of kin.

- It is, Sona, your home in Yerevan. After the renovation you have added these three canvases by Salvador Dali on the wall.

- Yes, but whose home does it have to be?

- It was simply that I got to America to see you.

- Father...

- Levon, your husband, went to America, didn't he?

- Yes, what of that?

- He sent an invitation to you and the children.

- Yes, and what...

- And you offered a condition that you would go only if there would be no likeness to the home in Yerevan.

- Yes, but what...

- You moved a few months ago.

- Couldn't make it yet. The Government is against the young men leaving the country, draft age.

- A little while ago you didn't recognize me at their home.

- Don't be sulky, dad, I was told that at their home I must do everything upside down, so that the process of life go straight. Doctor Lavey heads a mighty and dangerous Order.

- But Doctor Lavey is based in America, isn't he?

- Yes, true, father, what you say is true. He has never been in Armenia, and perhaps will never be. But he's been dead for quite some time.

- However, we saw him alive, both Srbik and me.

Ben's attention was attracted by a TV show on animals. For a moment Ben felt a gaze fixing him from the depth of the TV screen. The eye pupils were yellow. It was on him, no blinking. Then an elongated face came into view, with widening ears. Ben turned to the mirror. The bogus image persistently mimicked his

movements. As if anticipating Ben's intentions, the image started repeating his movements with a delay.

- What kind of order is it that I cannot take away from him, said Srbik, pretending to search for the charms, - and to such persons they give awards, while a person like me, who saves thousands of people from disaster, is treated as a nobody, even taken to court and indicted. They filed a suit against me, dragged me to court three times...

- It is not the order as you understand it, said Sona winking at her father.

- Anything happened to the child? - asked Srbik, I felt the impact, here, rip up the fringe of your pillow. See the charm? The shameless bastards, to plant a charm on this innocent child.

- The little one got breathless yesterday, - said Sona.

- That charm is powerful. Its planter was a magician. However, there is a greater danger hanging, I feel it, but I cannot see it. Be patient, I will find it now. This mirror troubles me, makes me confused, it sends back the beams. Sona, what kind of mirror is that?

The mirror is the door of the wardrobe.

- I see. Please, open it and have a look at the jacket on this side, OK, now see under the lining, it must be a black charm. Of all charms that one is the most terrible.

- I sewed it up yesterday, there was nothing.

- No, rip up the seams. Got it? Open the charm. See, there is a photo of father and son, a special note is made of the date: the fifth of May, a crash. Never burn it, take it to a garbage dump and throw it away. How many notes have we found?

- Eleven.

- You see, God willing, we met. From now on you will see only success, because evil has been overcome.

- What shall I give you for this big favor? asked Sona.

- Nothing, but if you like, buy this talisman, it is three hundred dollars. It is a wolf's tooth. You will keep it in a good place. It will prevent hex charms working in your house.

When Srbik was gone, Ben said:

- Sona, don't take offense, please, but I saw her take a black

cloth pack from under her sleeve and smartly show as if she got it from the jacket. I looked very carefully.

- Don't say that, dad, she is a famous necromancer within the whole of CIS. She is known worldwide.

- Of course, if she has already reached America and a person like doctor Lavey will mistake her for a famous actress...

- Father, we are in Armenia. But there is another problem.

- What problem, my girl?

- What devil has come into you? Do you feel uneasy now?

- No, Sona, I feel nothing. Perhaps he is weightless, a feather, it can be blown off by a wind. I am even afraid if I stamp my foot, it will take me off flying.

- It is slightly windy outside, won't you go flying?

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NOTE HUNTER

- No idea, now one can go even to the moon. Sona, dear, something happened to me the other day, I am not quite decided if it had anything to do with what is happening today.

- Tell me about it, father.

- It all happened in Shooshee. I was at my friend's country house.

- What friend?

- The name was Aslan. He was the head of Karabakh's rescue team during the war years. We reached Shooshee. A place full of blackberries and hornbeam trees. I climbed to the second floor, while Aslan was pacing the plot, making plans about its future arrangement. I looked out of the window and saw Aslan giving a yell suddenly and being pushed aside, as if bumped from behind. Then he started to talk with someone invisible. I got down to watch closely. Aslan was praying not to beat him, saying he came with a good purpose, to bring the

house in order and offering to live together and enjoy it. I came closer. Aslan got pale from fear. He must have been through tough days during the war, but no fear like that.

- We are not alone, said Aslan, - the house is inhabited.

- The former host? - I asked. Aslan said:

No. If it were him, it would be better.

- But who are those? - I asked.

Aslan said: - The souls of earlier hosts, -

Ben said: - How is that? Is it true, do the souls exist? I saw you leap aside, as if someone hit you,

- Aslan said: - Of course, a little while ago he beat me, and now he is on our side and trying to make it up to me. I ask him to leave me alone.

- Is there any other way to keep a hand on him?

- He can hear what we say, - warned Aslan.

- Does he understand Armenian?

- I don't know, but my request was heard.

- A man or a woman?

- No idea, but from the way he hit me it must be a man, said Aslan.

- Maybe ask help from His Eminence Parkev, I advised, the clergy know how to deal with the ghosts.

I did not finish my word when all of a sudden I received an unexpected blow on the back of my head. The blow was accompanied by a hard push. I was sprawled on the ground. I sprang to my feet lest I would also get the kicking. However, it seemed that the aggressor was satisfied. There was only a feeling of fever. I got it that the ghost had come inside me. It gave me creeps all over the small of my back and fever. There was a mess inside my whole body. Aches and pains were all over. I was thinking how to make it understood that I would not last too long. To start talking, reproach like Aslan, but he is inside, will he understand me? I started to raise hell, then to wallow on the ground. Aslan came up saying:

- What happened to you?

- Don't you see, a ghost got in, I said.

- Well, stay cool, I will tell you something, offered Aslan.

I shut up and was still. Aslan addressed the ghost that was in me.

- You again started to mess up things, this place is for Satan, if he knows, you know what he is going to do to you?

He crawled outside me with great difficulty, so that I gradually felt lightness in all places of my body, and the pains stopped.

- Thank you, - I said to Aslan. What did you do to make him obey?

- Well, I threatened him with Satan, however I am afraid to create extra trouble for you...

- What trouble, Aslan, I asked with concern.

- I told him that the body that he chose for a living belonged to Satan, that you have actually been chosen by him.

- I cannot sort out what is going on.

- Neither can I, said Aslan, - at the same moment this idea emerged in my head. Maybe, it was the only way to coax him out. We know now that he is afraid of Satan. That is at least something. However, your advice has to be considered very seriously: let us talk to his Eminence, he will do something, will release us from this trouble.

- And then, father, it is interesting, why you haven't told me about all that.

- Well, it is a scary story. Besides, later in the day some visitors came to congratulate Aslan at his feast. Joyful youths and girls. They decided to stay for the night. The ghost thrashed one more woman. I saw her sit on a yard bench crying.

- Aslan, where is it that you have brought me? - asked the woman.

What happened? - asked Aslan.

Someone invisible was tugging at me and beating me, complained the woman, he gave me a punch on the back, the spinal column could be damaged.

Aslan took fifteen buckets out of the well, stacked them at the wall. After getting asleep around midnight we heard a most



unusual concert by someone ringing on the buckets. Probably, the ghosts were doing some exercises by flipping the bucket handles. They wanted the sound to go together with the movements. Probably they never thought about disturbing people. Aslan, despite our requests, came down. Do what he could to stay unnoticed, the ghosts spotted him. They were like wicked children, and Aslan started to lecture them, asking them to keep down the noise to let the guests sleep. The various sounds showed that they were many, and mostly children.

When I joined Aslan, he said:

- When I was raking in the courtyard, I discovered a grave with children's bones.

- Aslan, I said, - everything is clear.. Those are the victims of Shooshee of March 40, 1920. The Turks slaughtered the family living in that house throwing them in the pit, then grabbed their house and property.

- And their souls did not want to leave, probably even took revenge for the massacre, concluded Aslan.

- Or maybe the new hosts felt the presence of souls and went on living in terror, he said.

- They were forgotten by the angels and remained in this world, concluded Aslan.

- Have they been preserved until now, those souls? - asked Sona.

No, Aslan requested the help of his Eminence. The Bishop brought some plants, they burnt them, their smell is unbearable for the ghosts. Then he prayed, performed some rites in all rooms of the house, and then declared that it was all clear.

- Where did they go, dad?

- I don't know, my girl, perhaps they moved to the other world, having no more place in this world.

- Well, of course, they were interested in residing in their own house, - said Sona, - and did you make anything out of their conversations?

Ben continued.

Then they started to knock on doors and to raise hell, but

later stopped knocking and started to talk. It was gibberish. The gibberish was with an Armenian accent. Perhaps it was a variety of the Shooshee dialect adapted to the ghosts' tongue.

- Now do you see any connection with today? - asked Sona.

- Haven't seen Aslan yet, to ask him why he did so.

- If that is all true, it was he whose decision was to surrender you to the devil.

- There is no way you cannot think so. If he indeed has gone inside me, then it is not clear who is using who.

- Dad, he can see and supervise you, while you cannot.

- I don't know, you can only make guesses. But the fact is that I dealt with creatures from a parallel world. The doctor is wrong saying that the otherworldly life does not exist.

- The fact that Satan entered you or passed through you...

- You just said it: passed through you. Maybe he did not stay in me, only passed.

- You can never say it if you don't know for sure, - said Sona, - in all cases you must consider the two possibilities.

- Consider or not consider, I determine nothing, - said Ben in a humiliated voice, - they are the masters of the situation.

- Well, father, your inner strength, your will power is what decides. If you do it with strength, they can get nowhere.

- Mm, do you think people like me may be among their victims..

- Don't give way to despair, father.

- OK, I have found the way out.

- Yes? - The daughter looked at Ben interrogatively.

- I write about it all.

- In what way is it connected with the situation?

- That is also the subject of their interest. That is their public relations. It seems that now they pay me due respect. That black dog, remember, she got up from her place.

- Yes, she looked at you so, the yellow eyes glittering.

- You also noticed.

- No doubt. She is not an ordinary dog. Did you see what happened to the Mercedes driver?

- So he enters a dog, a cat, whatever creature, and watches

you from there...

- Father, you are saying horrible things. I also feel his presence now.

- Yes, there is some lightness, as if it were that you were hovering in the air.

- True, it is indeed hovering. He has heard us from inside you... take care, dad.

- Don't worry. I will come again.

Ben felt his feet break away from the ground floor. Sona called.

- Father, father, what are you doing, don't let them take you away...

- Eh, who will need me?

Ben got down, took his stand on the ground.

- What pushed you, dad, to taking in the devil, asked Sona, tell me, confess, and you will become free from disease, from Satan...

- Sona, you want to apply the method of Zigmund Freud to me. But it is not for my case. What is meant by Freud is a previously schizophrenic situation and its suspension. Besides, this theory was very convenient to be used in the literature. While my case is quite different, you see, I am now a dual personality, a dual soul in one body. When the body dies, we shall be divided. Of course, it is not easy, with one body, for the two souls... However, we tolerate each other, sometimes even fill in each other's defects.

- But you are my father, are you not?

- Sure, the body and one soul is your father. To your father nothing happened.

- We went to the office with my son Nikita, there was the usual Benjamin there.

- I know, Sona...

- Is that one real, or...

- That is a replica...

- But he is material, though a little strange. You and not you. I understand nothing...

- What is strange?

- Laughing and talking to himself. Odet said: Benjamin is gone off the hooks.

- No, Sona, don't say so.

- Father, I will have to tell you another important thing.

- Say it.

- There is a boy named Vazgen working at your office.

- Yes, he is our web-designer. He is our key man in making up our sites.

- Do you trust him?

- Of course, recently some satanic organizations tried to break into our Web sites, but failed, the hackers opened a competition: who can break into the "Avetis" sites. Vazgen who used to be a hacker when in his teens, now is in incessant struggle against those hackers from the hackers' company called "Satanic".

- And do you know that your clandestine Vazgen is head of a giant worldwide system of Satanists?

- Vazgen, that frail boy?

- Yes, exterior and behavior are connected very loosely. I have been monitoring him for a long time. Try to make use of him for getting some information.

- Well, my little girl, I love you.

Sona came close, stretched her hand, as if trying to touch Ben. The hand freely made its way into her father.

Is he really there or is he not? Ben touched his body. Felt that it was he. Everything in place.

- Sona, my girl...

Ben heard his own voice. However, Sona evidently did not hear.

- Sona, what is on, it's me, father.

- Dad, where are you? I saw you go up...- the girl spoke with anxiety.

Hanging in the air, Ben could not go down in any way. He made an effort, and his hand passed through the ceiling.

"What a stupid situation, the one I've got into."

He slid down slowly, came up to his daughter, stretched his hand carefully. It passed through Sona.

“My God, in the same volume two parallel existences, thought Ben. – The parallel world has been there for millennia, but we ignored”.

Maybe some people knew, but who believed them? And if another existence has come into him, that can be equally present in two worlds at once, that means that it has a commanding position in two places. What about the world of substances? It seems that everything is in its place, however you can touch nothing. It is like a reflection in the mirror, you can see it but cannot touch it.

In what world did he appear?

He looked at the window, had a sudden wish to move outside. The wish and sliding out proved to coincide. In all appearances, here transport and thinking is the same. You wish it and you get it. All around everything was at its proper place. Ben was hovering in Yerevan air. But how to explain this flight? The flight of birds is well understood. With aircraft and choppers it is also clear. As a boy, he launched paper kites held with a thread. He remembered that in flight the air was not enough. Possibly in the direction of flight a pressure drop is formed, and a body moves from the high pressure area to the low pressure area, which process is continuous. Here evidently the flight is based on the movement of thought. One has to mentally get hold of a solid spot and fly. Why do people convert everything into matter? Why, the prime mover of civilization is thought, isn't it? So, he is in Yerevan, rather than in America, as they tried to make him believe. Who tried to make him believe? Everything was his own invention. Perhaps someone secretly follows him prompting him the thoughts, as the character of his book, the celestial nut prompted to write novels and tales about himself.

While hovering, Ben encountered a flock of birds in the air in the vicinity of the Opera House. They were crows that when meeting him croaked with alarm dispersing in different directions. People standing at a bus stop were putting their palms at their foreheads to see why the crows were so uneasy. Ben felt he was missing his world, the world of human smell. He went flying in the wake of the flock. It was nice. Ben had always

watched the flight of birds with envy, he had dreamt to freely hover in the air, to go where he is driven by his will. Ben had always felt envious of the birds flying across the wind, struggling against the wind, trying to cut across the distance, perhaps to reach the nest with the little ones, eventually, to get tired and surrender to the moving air, letting it drag him into disappearance.

Ben loved to write about birds and about the wind. He remembered what he had written. "... he dislikes the wind, of course, he loves the tempest, long distance, I howl by myself in the gaps between alien cliffs, feeling myself as a storm, thundering tremendously and furiously, soaring upwards and gliding, encountering trees on the way, dropping the leaves, this autumn lingering too long, stripping the trees bare, it is nice to see them whirling, what a wonderful world, I play, live, remember Sona all of a sudden, alas, reach her as a light breeze, caress... with a gaze, she, too, as if making no notice of the wind, and I leave downcast, until another burst, another attack on the cliffs..." What is actually the name of this girl? Angela? No, Angela was her classmate. When his classmate Rudik, dagger in hand, came up with an abrupt question: "Tell me the truth: will you propose to Angela?" Benjamin was unprepared to answer this type of question, for he had not yet ripened to settle down to married life, although he was not indifferent to Angela. Although mother wanted him to get married after graduating from high school, but he had plans of his own. Must go and continue his study, must find himself.

He felt inside a tremendous potential that should not be extinguished in agricultural fields or on a maintenance facility for farming machinery. He certainly understood that Angela could be a loyal friend to him. Angela rejected Rudik and advised by her carpenter-father, married his colleague carpenter. Then Benjamin felt that he loved Angela, and their love was mutual. Good Lord, what was her name? Ah, Bela... Ben saw her in Margoshevan on the way to his aunt's house, and fell in love with her. He felt that the liking was reciprocal. However, Benjamin lingered at some moment, timidity and agitation

prevented him from acting directly and resolutely, and he lost that case. At that time at his uncle's home in Nonashen he met Evelina, a beautiful relative of his uncle's wife. Anyway, they would join, they would merge. Ben went to see his mother, coming back in a few days, Evelina was gone. The uncle's wife said that the eye was on the road continually. With every sound of a motor, rushing outside. Went to Baku, with the brother, to sister. Sister's husband, a rude man, rapes wife's sister. The sister comes, soothing: big deal, don't think, all the same, it must have happened. She did not know about the sister's love. The brother decides to revenge the rude husband of his elder sister, rapes their thirteen-year-old daughter. This time the sister does not forgive her brother. Valera has to spend the next eight years of his life behind the bars. Later Benjamin learns that Evelina married an Armenian carpenter from Baku and would move to North Caucasus. Of course, it is difficult to part with sweet memories, he particularly remembered Evelina and Benjamin eating each other with eyes full of passion and love, clutching at the branches of a mulberry tree. A light breeze hugged the girl's body. Ben said that before climbing the tree he saw... The girl said: "It is OK, all is yours..." Will he find the name of his love related to the wind, thought Benjamin. It was definitely not Sveta Shuvalova. Sveta was in Moscow, but the windy love was in Yerevan. Why did he lose Sveta? For two years the Russian paintress filled with love believed and waited for Benjamin. Everything was ruined by Sara. Sara believed that the cause of Artem's and her love and marriage disaster was Benjamin, since the catastrophe happened after his coming to Moscow. It resulted from a strict and inexorable letter by Artem's father. Father was against his son's marriage with a Jewess. Sara wanted to revenge on Benjamin by persuading the Sveta who was inexperienced in love affairs that "the Caucasians were cheats, they take possession, then pitilessly abandon the girls." Benjamin wrote from Leipzig that Sveta should not hurry into conclusions, that he loved her, that she should wait for his return. However Sveta was his no more, despite Benjamin being not ready to agree with that. It is not easy to concede defeat.

Sveta returned his letters with no answers. He was sure that Sveta would patiently wait for his return. However, her patience was not unlimited. She was a beautiful and attractive girl, no doubt the young men would not let her go. Anyway, she relaxed providing a pretext for dumping Benjamin. Benjamin's consolation was fun and games with the German Petra. And the Byelorussian Isloch... Love with her was a game, a literary romance, or was it real love? Benjamin used to write about a leisurely flow of a flat-land river, a forest of sky-piercing pines, trees and the feelings of Isloch in trees, and about love.

Eventually, her mother, his wife, and the entire population of the vacation house, from Armenia and from Belarus, considered it their duty to meddle into the love affair of those two young people, mercilessly trampling and ruining everything. Benjamin was recording the feelings and all emotional experience. Finally, in contrast to other love affairs, except the windy love, he weaved a story about it all. Benjamin valued this story not for its artistic merit, but rather for his love for Isloch. And here was the subject of love with regard to the wind... Lord God, he remembered, within the brain's forgotten folds of memory an old and frayed page opened, flashing the name of Rita... Clearly, it was the sister of his friend Ashot. When finally Benjamin was free from the shackles of timidity and fear of uncertainty, he confessed that he loved her, when Rita got mad and reproached him: "Why didn't you say, why were you late, what have you done..." So, she had waited long for Ben's proposal, was disappointed, lost all hope and decided to yield to the proposals of marriage by the deputy chief of the auto repair workshop. From that moment on, Rita was demoted in the eyes of Benjamin, she became commonplace and easily accessible...

Falling into reflections and reminiscences, Benjamin seemingly came to for a moment and felt with a delay that he got into a stream of strong wind, and that he could not get out of the stream in any way. Water has some density in it, one can swim and get out if one is captured in a flow, but how to stay free of the moving air, Ben did not know. The wind filled in all clothes and threw him right and left like a toy. However a



headwind struck unexpectedly, flung him out, and Benjamin for a moment stayed hanging in the air. It started to rain hard. The sun made its way through the dark clouds. The roofs of the buildings glittered. The lightning struck. It seemed to compete with the sun. But Mount Aragats was covered in haze. The rain drove faster. The sun set. The line-drops bent on the sun rays, lending good mood to the surrounding scenery. It was a merry rain indeed.

At the next moment under the bright rays of the sun the rain and the fog seemed to be fake, although there was nothing artificial at all. The rain tried to drive and pull the rain away. The rain dropped bent lines. Perhaps the wind wanted to help the sun. On the west the sky opened here and there for a luxurious and solemn sunset. Ben had to wait for an hour and to take part in this show.

There was a flash of lightning close by. A heavy fog filled Ben's inside with fear. The lightning rod caught the attacking lightning. This is the strike of God on the Devil. So, God will not spare him. The window glass jingled. As if the cloud felt that Ben was in the same team with the sun.

The wind stopped. The rain lines got straight. The clouds rushed to the East. The cloud flocks like winged monsters with opened jaws tried to swallow him. The south part of the city darkened. The dark clouds brought gloom. Instead, Mount Aragats opened. It looked close. Descending from the mountain top were five lines. The fiery clouds under the sun's luster formed a gilded cross on the west. Rev. Simon would say: "A sign of Christ. Not everyone is granted a sight like that. This is Revelation. Believe, and the light will open for you." Hanging upon the blue of the heaven were white half-lucid clouds. The sun now peeped from under the clouds, now sank.

Eventually, the sun escaped and dropped in haste.

It is time...

Deeply engaged in thought, Ben for a moment watched and recognized the familiar neighborhood, the house where he lived for about 40 years. There, perhaps to jog up Ben's memories, they left everything as it was. He remembered as his five-year-

old son Hovannes was lost, Ben, forgetting that the case was twenty years old, started to look for his son in the courtyards of the five-storey buildings. Then he remembered that he found him after a long search in a remote playground. Ben was very worried, since the Mafiosi, the oppressors, filling the country, and the implacable criticism over TV channels denouncing them, continually threatened to destroy his family and to kidnap children. It was the first time that he felt the horror of the loss of his son. And the racketeers who were placed at high official positions, the Mafiosi, watched gangster films, as manuals in kidnapping children, stealing cars, and orchestrating plunder and burglaries.

Ben approached the house. It was a five-storey building with concrete walls. An ugly Khrushchev-type building unfit for human habitation looked handsome to him. It was the place where his children had lived and grown. He looked inside through the window. His soul was filled with anxiety. There was a voice of Eva, his wife. He was again seized with reminiscences.

Wife is yelling at the two-year-old Hovik.

- I will bury you, Hovan-boy, burry you...

The little one is whimpering something, wanting something.

- Let him take it, asked Benjamin, - he is little, isn't he, doesn't understand what is wrong.

- Mama fool, mama fool..., - said Hovik.

Mother slapped the child like crazy. He was yelling at the top of his voice. Radio on the one hand, TV on the other, and added to that the child crying...

- You are talking trash, said the wife, if you can nurse, take the child and nurse him.

He took the child in his arms. The child started kissing his father. It angered mother and she tore him away.

What should he do? Abandon? What about the two-year Hovannes? And the ten-year-old Sona? Leave them without fatherly care? But how to tolerate Eva? Eva's nagging will never end. She is assaulting Benjamin at all occasions, hurtling curses, abusing, and finally all the nagging is dumped on the

children

The only consolation and rescue is writing. Benjamin was sitting near the office deep in thought, writing. At times like that he hated being disturbed. Eva came up and turned off the light under the lampshade.

- Light will hurt your eyes, she said, interfering into the flow of Benjamin's thoughts. Ben knew that his wife had never liked her husband writing.

- With no light my eyes can see nothing, said Ben pressing the button again.

- What a miserable man you are, said the wife, thus reminding him of her existence and importance.

Appearing before Ben was a new wave of images: No one at home. Either at the neighbors', or outside. That means at her father's. Of course, Benjamin was again ignored, no message, nothing. That was her way to show independence. If he uttered a single word, the full load of anger would be discharged. On the phone, mother answered that they had just left. He watched football nervously. He was stressed to the limit. The favorites won, so Benjamin cooled down. Everything looked serene. There was no tension. Wife stormed in noisily. The orders were: Put on the tea, warm up the dinner.

He was reading a paper while fulfilling the wife's orders.

Eva was packing the linen.

- Hold at the edges. – said the wife imperatively.

He didn't budge. The paper was engaging.

- I told you to hold it at the edges.

- Let Sona hold it.

- What is it, can't you be helpful at least in one way?

That woman had a strange feature. She could put so much poison in simplest things that any triviality would sound an abuse; it will torture and exhaust you to the end.

In the morning she said:

- Go and dump the trash.

Benjamin was a TV-programming operator, he had to transcribe a section of the sound track from a sound recorder and report to work on time. Again, a simple word, which

however was accompanied by slamming the door. For twenty days there has been no explosion. It was an explosion that lasted several hours.

Sona helped packing the linen.

- Hush, Eva, hush, - said Benjamin.

There was no end to abuse. She reproached Benjamin for laziness. Then she came over to Benjamin's exterior.

Men in the street say your husband is lucky. They don't know my so-called husband, an indifferent fool. Anyway, I am a hundred times your better, engaging and beautiful, I have never been a match to you. Bald, ugly, elderly...

Then came the salary.

I could have married a manufacturer or a policeman, they would have been better family keepers. Here, I am going to start working, then I will despise you even more, spit upon you.

The husband listened and blamed himself. Ben hinted on calling the ambulance the day before.

- We called them to check my pressure, answered the wife.

- But you have no pressure, they don't call an ambulance for a headache. Too many sick people, medics are very hardly pressed.

- A real swine you are, the indifferent. An animal, indeed, I don't understand. Does nothing, no child care, doesn't take me anywhere. Writing, oh yes, he does the writing. Let's see it yet, what is the use of it.

When Ben makes a move, Sona interferes:

- Father, father, don't beat, please.

- Beat whom, no fear, he beat one, get back ten, you will see yet, you will get it from me...

- Shut up, do you hear, shut up...

- I am just talking, what is that to you?

- Shut up, don't talk, can you? I am in trouble; I don't want to live, while you again and again push me to taking my own life. Instead of helping me out of this situation, you throw me into the abyss.

It was a spill over banks. Benjamin has always been able to control himself. A boxer's punch could be lethal for a frail and

talkative woman. Sona is crying and clinging to father's sleeves. But the mother had to tease, irritate, to get stopped by an abrupt punch. There was a recall of the first punch. The child cried at night. He woke up and saw the mother put a six-month-old child on a desk and starting to inflict blows on her angrily. Benjamin jumped up, pushed Eva aside, and, taking away the child from her, started rocking the child. The crying stopped at once. Eva approached from behind and banged him on the head. He put the child aside, got up to his feet and he struck. He only saw that Eva was outstretched on the floor and sliding under the bed.

The woman kept mum for a moment, then opened the door and said:

- You never bought a single bunch of flowers for me on the eighth of March.

She knew that those words could have been said in many different tones. It was possible to find a tone to the words as to make them agreeable. However, the woman filled those words with so much poison that the meaning of what she said was immaterial. Let us say she asks: "Are you having a meal?" These words contain so much reproach that you will not want to go on eating, regardless of whether you are the breadwinner or not.

- You should have stayed at home, - said Benjamin, - why, you had left for your father's home.

- You could have called at least once to send my mother season's greetings or birthday's greetings,

- Every action is reciprocal.

- Well, they don't give a damn for you.

Ben's heart beat faster. He won't last long. And no escape route.

In the morning Eva passed him with contempt, breathing hard.

The twitter of birds outside grew louder. Let us see if they, too, have a Eva-like type in their midst, to drive her husband mad.

Hovannes, the little one, calls out, seeing his father:

- Daddy...

While the mother:

- What a daddy is he to you, oh, no, the corns.

There came continuously slapping sounds from the other room. It was kissing of the child. The mouth cavity creates vacuum, the round-shaped cheek of the little one is drawn in as far as it can go, and then is released with a slap. She knew how to annoy Benjamin. Saying many times over:

- Life, life, life... you are my life...

It is spring time. Eva has caught cold. Her back was rubbed with mulberry vodka that had been rectified by Benjamin, then iodine reticle was applied.

- I have brought fish, it's cisco, said Eva.

- Where from? - asked Benjamin.

- A gift from my lover. You think others are stingy, like you?

- I see. - Terrific lovers you've got.

Benjamin continued to keep to the funny line, but his control was nearly gone.

- Shall we pick it up together? asked the wife.

- No picking up with you, said Benjamin.

Eva made a U-turn and left.

In the evening the wife tried to explore the PR again.

- Perhaps you could choose?

- No.

Then again later:

- Would you have something to eat?

Ben was reading a book. The reading can of course be very different. It was the bees' love in Sodom and Gomorrah by Marcel Proust.

- Is there anything to eat? surrendered Benjamin.

- Fish.

- I won't.

- Why?

- I am not going to eat the fish provided by your lover.

- Ah, what an imbecile. As if you are five years old.

What you said, true or false, is stupid. If it got into your mind to show this miserable fish as your lover's gift, let it be so. You are too arrogant, it is repugnant.

The wife served him fish putting it in front of him in a dish.

- So, this is your lover's fish?

- It was a joke, said the wife, however added in a moment, - bless his soul. He brought it from Lake Sevan, there was also mutton, I didn't take it, I said your work won't feed too many folks.

- I spit on your lover.

- Don't make shots at him.

- Spit on him.

- He will also spit at you.

Ben threw some potherb in wife's face.

- Never talk to me like that, said Benjamin leaving the kitchen.

He attempted to read a book. Nothing came out. He lay in bed. He felt a dull pain in his thighs. There was an inkling in him to jump up every second with no purpose. Had an imaginary discussion with his colleagues: "You hold the post of department chief, however you don't know how to edit. Rather than to cut down, your business is to help the TV viewers to get the right news. You have annihilated the portrait of a farmer. I've got my own way of supplying the footage. You dislike men of principle. Then you must forfeit the right to edit.

"My God, thought Benjamin, disputes everywhere, at home, at work. What can one do so that life would go without conflicts, I wonder if it is my fault. I love peace and quiet, but it is just what I cannot create. A squabbler and an intrigue-seeker was what he had unconsciously found in Eva.

The daughter, Sona, came in.

- Father, can I ask you for a pen?

The mother opened the door and squealed.

- Who told you to come in, get out at once!

- Why are you shouting, - said the father angrily.

- Sona, - said mother, - come and have your meal, have your meal, I said. Sona, who am I talking to?

She thought that if she remained silent, she would have suffered a defeat.

A little later Sona came in again:

- I shall take the broom, father.

- Yes, my child...

Sona withdrew the dustbin and said sulkily:

- See, father, this is the way to sweep the floor, just have a look at it, you have just to see it...

Sona started to sweep the floor.

Benjamin thought about himself: "He is either a creature that is too weak, soil pulverized under his wife's heel, spat upon and thrown into a garbage dump, or else some type of a strong man, who can elevate himself above the petty human relationships, to overview from great elevation and simply to forgive the sickly, deranged woman, even the extremely cunning creature who is his wife, or perhaps a demon hidden under a human mask. No, Benjamin has designed a wicked game, if launched, he can even become happy, he will keep the monster close to him, to punish it with his own hands, the evil and spiteful entity".

This is the way Benjamin invented some temporary exoneration for himself justifying his unusual tolerance, until the event should happen itself to resolve the issues.

With difficulty, Ben took off from the windowsill, entrusting himself to the will of Satan having no more idea of where he was heading. He looked down. Walking along Aram Khachaturian Street were Srbik and Astkhik, Sona's friend. They were croaking at the top of their voices discussing the buffoonery they had arranged at Sona's apartment.

- Did you see how we fooled them, said Astkhik, - I feared however that you would not find the "black note".

- You don't say so, that's inborn with me.

- Ah, so, naturally endowed. I told them many times where the note was, but they messed it up again.

- I got them all. You see, the important thing is not what you are in actual life, but what you think about yourself. When people say God, he is, if they don't believe, he is not. Satan is also very much like that.

- Listen, don't call the name of Satan, I am afraid of him, - said Astkhik.

- What, don't you have fear of God?



- No, God absolves from sin, while Satan doesn't, he can only punish.

- I have spoken to a Satanist. I wanted to check, whether Satan is indulgent to charm planters and sorcerers.

- And so?

- We are regarded as quacks.

- That means that we shall go neither to paradise, nor to hell.

- If there are only two places on the other side of the black stump, we will appear elsewhere. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable, no one knows, lo and behold, we could get to paradise.

- Hm, dear Srbik, who I fear is that man, Benjamin, Sona's father, he seems to be dangerous. He will squeal on us.

- That Sona, keep her in your view, go on dumping on that Lusine all you've got. It was so smart of you to make up that Lusine.

- A stupid girl, she head over heels fell into our trap.

- What would you do if she were not there?

- They have a hostile neighbor, or one could dump it on the mother.

- She will not believe. What an artist you are!

- I cannot equal you, girl, how did you manage to plant your charms at so many places? All written by Grigor?

- Fat chance, Grigor! I write such black notes now...

- Oh, yes, listen, never heard the like of it. Damn it all, a photo was taken of a father and child, then a cross drawn over them and a lettering: "crash".

- What could I do, couldn't remember the Armenian word for "traffic accident".

If you asked me, I would tell you, dear Astra, no problem.

- Well, all the same, Sona is a very naive girl, she will never guess it.

Ben decided to return and warn Sona. However, how to communicate with the daughter when she is in another world. Besides, will Sona believe him?

- You remember where they live, don't you, Astra?

- I do, how can I forget it, here I am, - answered Astrik, took out the phone in a moment from her bag and said: - yes, Grigor dear, I am coming.

- Where are you going, girl, without you...

- Well, you know all places, I said seven places, get at least three, that will do it.

- But you skipped the name.

- What name?

- What name shall it be, you know, when the note maker has no convenient name, you will be recalled and traced back, as the real doer.

- Yah, right, they have to mix up amidst them and become embittered before forgetting me. The best figure is the sister of the hostess' husband. She is hated.

- Say the name, Astr.

- Let me remember. Plumb forgot it. The first letter is "L".

- Maybe again "Lucine"?

- No, by no means, Luisa, I remember. Well do I hate her.

- Now I'll give one day to your hated Luiza. "Did you write "crash" in your black note?

- Who cares?

- Can Luisa read?

- Yes, a lecturer, I think, with a science degree.

- Could she have written "crash"?

- It's been done already. In the case of Lusine it was the same, however no one pays attention. What is needed is to find and to mention a name beginning with an "L"

- Well, I will think of something. Luisa has not written, but she has feigned the charm planter's handwriting, so that the curse take root.

- That was right, - stated Astghik, - I would have done the same.

There was a call on the phone.

- Oh, yes, Srbik, in a few minutes Srbik is coming to your doorstep, will you please go and meet her. She is in a yellowish coat and colored headscarf. I am wanted at the hospital, leaving now. I got nothing to do with it, dear, I found Srbik at your

request, got round her, you will have to let go soon, they are waiting at the airport to go to Moscow. What can you do, the poor one has not time enough, she is the only normal sorcerer in CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). They say they will take her to the Putins'. See, they too plant charms on one another. The world has been built on the writ, but we ignore. But you have been lucky, she will come and cleanse your house of everything. - Again to Srbik, - hello, girl, I am leaving.

- Hush, what will you get?

- As always.

- But don't you repeat Sona's story. I will give twenty thousand, if there is a difference, there will be more.

- Yes, Srbik, I want everything to be clean between us. It is the opposite building, just the first entrance. Second floor, right, no, no, the door on the left.

While Ben was indecisive, whether to rush to Sona, or to try and save that innocent family from crafty designs of Astrik and Srbik, a young woman came up to the sorceress and ushered her to her apartment. Srbik came in, doffed her coat, asked for the hostess' dressing gown, put it on saying:

- I am putting it on lest you say that I stuffed the ready-made charms in my pockets.

- No, not at all, no one here suspects you, we all trust you.

- I have suffered clinical death twice, that is I have been in the other world and returned twice, - explained Srbik in a confidential tone, then all of a sudden I started to perceive the places of curses and evil charms, I started to discover and release people from the effects of cursing. But I am in a hurry, let me concentrate. I feel that there is a lot of business here. I feel a breath of Satan in this house. Notes of tremendous strength have been placed in the corners of this house.

Ben was worried. "Perhaps she might have felt my presence or that of Satan in me. No, she has in mind the notes left by Astghik.

- I feel the cursing power in the bedroom. How have you slept in this room for years? My God, I could strangle the note maker with my own hands. - She stretched her trembling and

then shaking arm, rolled her palm, - this blanket hasn't been touched for two years. Pity. Unrip this fringe.

The hostess unripped it in front of her husband and children, there was nothing.

- Well, I will find it, you will remove it yourself.

She palpated and caught hold of some place.

- I got it, now grab it and rip it off. See? Open it. What is written?

The hostess who was very worried, opened the piece of crumpled paper and read: "Disease, suffering, breakdown of family, L."

- I don't know who "L" is, said Srbik, - you will examine it and see yourself, now let us go for more notes.

- I have already known who it was, said the hostess with conviction. Her eyes and those of her husband met. The husband took his eyes away

- The note has a history of eighteen months, said Srbik, - but it is not finished, I have not yet cleansed the house. I feel a magnetizing force in the cabinet. That so-called "L" has found a mighty note maker. In all, I know two persons whose notes are that strong.

- Will you tell us the names, asked the hostess.

- No, they are mighty people, almost equal to Satan, they know that I know them, there is no escape from them.

- What if we ask that our foe be covered with a note?

- No need to do that. I will solve the problem. I feel an oppressing force coming from that cabinet. Have a look in the pocket of the last jacket on the right, or rather rip off the lining of the right -hand pocket and see what is in. Did you get it? It is note number one. It is wrapped up in a black package. That is the black note. It has a force that is inevitable. Destruction of the note is not sufficient to get rid of the note's effects. I will have to perform a special rite. Take this amulet, it is a wolf's tooth, it alone can overcome and expel the black curse. Open, open it and we see the writing.

The woman carefully opened the paper with trembling fingers. Showed the writing silently. With an awkward hand

silhouette images were drawn of a man and two children, with a legend beneath reading: “crash, June 6”, followed by the sign “L-g”.

- What is “L-g”? - asked the man.

- I don't know, neither do I want to know, said the sorceress.

- Why?

- Because your inner affairs have nothing to do with me, I only discover, destroy the power of the curse at the expense of my inside energy, the rest is your business.

- As if you ignore whose work that is, addressed the wife to her husband, as easy as ABC.

- Take your time, Nune, there is still time to discuss it.

Ben can now imagine, what disaster is going to befall this family. The interior hostility can destroy not only peace, but also families.

Ben had nothing more to do, he extended his hand and slipped out through the window.

## CHAPTER 3

### GOD WITH YOU

The face of a man sitting under a thick tree at the pine grove close to the Cathedral of Ejmiadzin looked familiar. It was Rev. Simon, who later became Rev. Harutiun and was appointed abbot of the Church of Saint Gayane. He had met him about 40 years before at the Temple of Ejmiadzin. Ben's attention was attracted by a sermon being delivered by a sturdily built seminary student to a group of surrounding believers. He spoke in a biblical language of a hundred years ago, concealing in this way his accent of a native of Javakhk. When he finished his sermon, Benjamin asked him to lend him the Bible for a few days, since he had started to write a novel and was unable to go on without the word of God, all the more so that in his novel God

went down from heaven to earth.

- Why did he go down? - asked the seminary student.

- When people do not call His name, his glitter goes dim, He goes down with His angels, to preach and to bring the people to faith again.

- I see now that you really need the word of God.

Rev. Simon offered Benjamin his hostel room, gave him a 150-year-old Bible printed in Jerusalem, assigning him to return it in a week's time.

Benjamin brought it back after one week, and the young clergyman gave the book to him as a gift, saying that it had been his promise to God. That was the origin of their close friendship. However, the activation of the Artsakh movement detached Benjamin from his old friends, including the clergy.

- What are you doing now? - asked Rev. Harutiun.

- Gathering photos of war and militant activities.

- The massacre of 1915 was a gift of God to the Armenians, - said the clergyman.

- What do you say, Rev. Simon?

- I have been ordained as Rev. Harutiun, dear brother.

- Rev. Harutiun, reiterated Benjamin.

- I will explain it now. Every day I speak to Our Lord Christ. He knows everything, since he is the seer of all. When a man is expected, he is immediately cleansed of sins and appears in Paradise. After the Genocide, the Armenian army in Paradise has become more numerous and mighty. We are the mightiest there now. There is going to be another massacre. God promised to do it, so that we become a nation of the Universe. What is important is the heavenly life, for it is eternal, while the earthly life is the purgatory, to draw a line between the good and the evil. A great future is awaiting our nation.

- So, the Jews will have an even greater future.

- No, Jesus Christ does not accept their sacrifices, for they had not accepted His faith and crucified Him.

- But through crucifixion His doctrine has become known to the world.

- Don't forget that they tortured Christ.

- Since 301 the Armenians have carried the Cross of Christ, therefore they have been punished, sacrificed, murdered.

- Yes, each time reborn from the ashes in order to continue fulfilling the Testament of God, said the priest.

- What about the Buddhists, Muslims, sun worshippers or fire worshippers, don't they have place in Paradise?

- Of course, not.

- Rev. Harutiun, you have an idea about the world, don't you, - asked Benjamin.

The clergyman smiled generously. Benjamin caught a glimpse of reproach in that smile. He forgave Benjamin his ignorance, having the knowledge of Christ and consequently of the world.

- Dear brother Benjamin, I understand that the world of men has taken roots in you very deeply. I remember your initial narratives and stories. However, the light of the Lord did not open upon you, and you stayed in the dark, despite being so close to light. But I pray for you, and you chose the darkness, however the Lord looked at you with a kind eye. During the war years I followed your steps and asked the angel to protect you from danger.

- In Sumgait, the city of genocide perpetrators, I actually felt the presence of the angel, admitted Benjamin. - In Gandzak there was also a rescue by miracle.

- I am lucky indeed, to have helped you with my prayers. Sumgait and Gandzak, I felt them. I was with you all along, following and overseeing your every step through the angels. Recently my link with you was severed. I was subjected to testing by God.

- What testing, Rev. Harutiun?

- Catholicos has unfrocked me.

- Why?

- They sent female spies to defame me.

- You are a rebel, you will not tolerate an ungodly priest.

- They are secular people having nothing to do with Faith and God.

- However, as of today, Church can only be sustained by a

secular man.

- That means that Church is losing its meaning. What is left to us is to remain isolated in our belief in God, perhaps that is the way to save mankind from destruction, from God's last judgment.

Rev. Harutiun fixed an intent look upon Benjamin's eyes and said:

- You have a demon in you now. I know, it was beyond your will. You are not bifurcated. Jesus Christ says that I should not interfere with the demon inside you. He is now looking quietly in my eyes from within.

- Maybe it is not a demon, but an angel of God, - said Benjamin.

- Who knows.- answered Rev. Harutiun, - but I can see and feel him.

- Can you remove him from inside me?

- No, it is not an easy matter, -said the clergyman, - that is the matter only for the Lord, but I cannot meddle into God's affairs. It seems that you have an individual mission. Then do what is prompted by your mind.

- Or by Satan.

- God willing. But come and see me now and then. I will pray and address the Supreme. - The believer raised his eyes and drew the sign of the cross. - You must never make the sign of the cross, until I tell you how to behave.

- Well, Holy Father, I'll visit you as soon as an occasion offers. Now there is a question I want to discuss.

- Say it, I will answer you if God is willing.

- When the soul is detached from a living man, he remains sensitized. Anyway, why should a soul go away from a living man? - again asked Benjamin.

Rev. Harutiun fell silent for a moment, started to think, looked up,

- In the fifth century in Artsakh land there was a large believer, King Vachakan. He in a similar way made an inquiry to the learned priest Matte in the village Darahoj of Haband region stretching on a valley in Voskevan Mountains: "The souls getting



out of the body, are they sensitive or dumb, or we, the living ones, how can we help the dead?"

- And what was the answer?

- You will find the answer in the writings by the big history teller of your country named Movses. Do you often visit your native Artsakh? Anyway, get in touch with King Vachakan. God will help to elucidate you with his assistance. New doors will open before you.

- I have read it, but not too attentively.

- Very well, you will stay alone and you will remember. Don't forget, Jesus Christ is with you.

Ben entered the Cathedral, lit a candle in memory of his parents, then to his family, two states of existence, love, the earth, the borders of his country and their welfare. He remembered the words of the priest. Three candles remained. He lit one to God, next to Vachakan, then to priest Matte. From inside the candle flame there seemed to appear the priest saying: fast, pray to God and beseech Him, or leave some memory of the deeds done in their names. Just like David, putting on Saul's weapons, started to limp and stumble, but when he undressed and threw off the heavy armaments, he regained his previous condition, the same with the souls, getting rid of the bodies that are overburdening them. The soul becomes sharp-sighted and more sensitive. Of course, there are also insensitive souls, many of them are in humans. You must know that God descended into hell to save them, so as to show that the souls that are exempt from bodies are just and sensitive and wise". "What about my situation, Rev. Matte?" "You have divorced, to become wiser. You supervise and control your inner energy. Through you God will do big things. It is me who says that, Darahoji Matte". "What about King Vachakan?" "King Vachakan what?" "He is also dual?" "You are the only one who guessed" So, you are making use of the fruits of wisdom. Get in touch with Vachakan". "How?" "You will think about him, and he will appear to you". There came some wind, swayed towards Matte and Matte disappeared, rapidly vanished, awarding Ben with a fleeting smile.

Ben came in home stealthily. The wife came, took no notice. She watched a TV show on ocean life. Ben, too, had a glimpse and suddenly he saw eyes directed at him on the TV screen. Instead of white there was yellow of the eyes. They were unwinking. Then appeared a prolonged snout, with wide and sticking ears. Ben went to the bedroom to fetch pen and paper. Had a look at himself in a mirror. He saw his own image at first, but then the TV snout appeared.

- Is it my reflection? - whose is it? - asked Ben.

- Both yours and mine, - spoke the image.

- You follow me everywhere I go.

- When you were taking pictures in Sumgait, we followed you and guarded...

- Ah, here is what it is, but I thought...

- Ah, of course, you thought that angels were screening you to save you from the Turks, or that Rev. Harutian prayed for you and kept sending the guards.

- In actual fact the guardian was the devil.

- Angels, devils,... invented by people.

- Is it the same in reality?

- No doubt. When in November 88 the helicopter with the Turkish thugs landed in the Armenian quarter of the surrounded Gandzak, even we had difficulty in saving you. Four helicopters of the Aggressor were in the air seeking your chopper so as to shoot it down.

- And how did we get saved?

- It was good that there were heavy clouds around, the chopper took refuge in those.

- You could send a sign for me to see.

- Like hell! As if you had nothing else to do.

- It was a riddle to me, how a huge mulberry wrapped around me, and I stayed intact.

- Oh, yes, an invalid at the orchard gate saw the tree wrapping around you and gave a heart-rending yell. You were bewildered and swore like a trooper.

- I don't quite see, was it thirty years ago?

- Yes.

- At that time you also watched me?
- Of course.
- What about the battlefield?
- You gave us trouble enough. It seemed hopeless. We diverted bullets and slugs flying at you.
- Yes, at the front line, remember, on the TV-tower hill, when I was looking for my lost notebook in the grass a shell exploded at my side, I was surprised that there was nothing the matter with me.
- We made up such a shield...
- At that moment the Azeri marksmen made me a live target.
- Yah, you kept us quite busy. Anyway, there had been a decision from above.
- Who was the decision maker?
- Well, search me. Do you think we understand?
- Wouldn't it be easier for you to preserve the notebook, or to mark the place where it was lost in the grass.
- We have our working rules.
- And when it was decided to eliminate me by friendly fire?
- We don't have friends or foes. We had to create excuses in your favor in their brains. They were convinced that you were favored by the population, and if they took a step against you the people who had brought them to power would become agitated, creating waves that would sweep them off.
- Wouldn't it be better like that?
- At the price of losing you?
- I asked the Turk watchman of the temple of Dad, why he was guarding a Christian temple. He said that he was paid for that job.

So, you think that someone pays money for preserving you? With people it is like that.

- And how is it with you?
- We are accountable for the public events, however the events have executors and elementary units. We are the ones who support those units.

The snout was replaced by his face. Ben pulled a grimace. The reflection did the same with an interval of half-a-second.

Ben's glance fell upon a dirty rag on the floor sending him into a deep reverie.

A month ago in a small garden under the windows Mother-in-law addressed Benjamin.

- It must be a rare occasion that a mother complain her son-in-law about her daughter, but you are very close, besides, there is no one with whom to share.

Mother-in-law, Eran could hardly feel happy with the latest changes, or rather she was not quite prepared for them. The primary question for this woman was, who is the bread winner of the house. After the death of her husband she was trying hard to stay at her home, although Benjamin, her son-in-law, insisted that she should be placed with his family, since she had considerable difficulties going out for the groceries. All water piping in the apartment was dismantled by the water supply authorities, saying that the piping should be replaced, because water was leaking into the adjacent premises. Winter added water from the leaking roof. The ceiling and walls reeked of dampness. Benjamin informed Eva that dampness from walls was soaking into mother, and soon enough they will all be infected with the dampness-related diseases. To get saved from cold and dampness, Eran wrapped herself in silk shawls, but she had never burned two stoves at once to keep down the energy expenses. However he felt with trembling heart the approaching disaster, the loss of his longed-for solitude.

And the girl, too:

- This is our small bedroom, I say, you must compare with your bedroom and the balcony, it was a concession to you, the garden below is yours. Says I will take it along with me.

- The same thing could be said in a softer and gentler way.

- You, too, could be coming in now and then, to ask about health.

- Each time shows her husband's picture, as if saying: "Here, I want to see this man...", One can think I am the one who escorts to the other world.

- He's taken after his father Grigor. He liked to be alone. Grigor who was chief of farmer's cooperative, lived 96 years,

was alone for 40 years after his wife's death, no children, no grandchildren, he wanted to see no one. When he was bedridden, no one came.

The elder daughter, with whom his relationships were closer, did not visit her mother for 12 months and sometimes appeared at the entrance to mother's house, asking the ground-floor tenant: "Hasn't the old hag died yet?" The neighbor climbed the 4<sup>th</sup> floor at once, to tell Claudia, the opposite-door neighbor, who relayed it to Eran: "Your daughter Ira inquires about when you are going to die".

- If so, I will not die..., - answered Eran.

- But why is she so interested, asked Claudia.

Both Eran and Claudia, the opposite-door neighbors, were widows, left in the house alone. Claudia's son and daughter had established themselves in Moscow, while the families of Eran's daughters were in Yerevan.

- She is registered in this house, is waiting for me to die, to get hold of the apartment.

- Your younger daughter, doesn't she have a share?

- She has none,

- Never let her in, or else, fighting and trouble.

- I must ask my son-in-law to deregister Ira, so as to sell the flat.

- What will Ben say?

- What can he say, he says call your daughter, divide the property between the two, and let them live in peace. But Ira doesn't want that. I say, deregister, so that I could benefit from the "Pharos" charity as a lone tenant. She is not coming waiting for me to quit.

- What was that assault on your house in the middle of the night? The clatter was terrible.

- It was my other son-in-law, Alfred, saying: get out of this flat, I will live there.

- Has he no place to live?

- Why, yes, he has a three-room apartment.

- Eh, Eran, Eran, what you used to be and what you have become. Well, thank God, there is the younger one taking care

of you.

- I have filed a suit to deregister Ira.
- You did right, but still you will have trouble.

Ben's gaze could not go off a fur rug. A face was watching him out of that rug. - It was like the mythological Medusa face, protruding eyes, open mouth, snakes popping out of her head. Ben trampled the face. But it stayed. The 3-D image was flattened. Lights went on. The image stayed. Opened and closed its eyes. From among the brown-colored bunches of fur looked hundreds of faces, as if descended and merged from canvases of Renaissance Masters.

Just to take up the brush and to paint.

A sound of a song came from the outside. The song seemed to be familiar, however there was no way he could tell where he could have heard it. A sound of the thav was a sweet reminder to Ben about his grandfather Harutiun who had played this old tune coming down from his grandfathers.

There was a sound of doorbell.

- Who is there? - asked Eva.
- Postman. There is a letter for you, said the voice behind the door.

Eva opened the door. The singing sound coming from the courtyard became stronger. Ben was strained. He knew that housebreakers often cheat in this way, to get in and rob apartments killing the tenants. Eva took up the envelope, read the letter and put it on the table. Ben came up and read it. It was a subpoena from the court. Benjamin and mother-in-law, Eranouhi Tovmasyan were summoned to court. The elder daughter sued her mother: mother gave her seven thousand dollars after selling the apartment, instead of eight thousand, now she demands to pay one thousand more. To inform the dying mother-in-law about it would be unwise, but why mix her into this business was not quite clear. Ben again examined the subpoena, specified the date and time. Then he came up to the door preparing to slip out, when Eva said from behind:

- Where are you going without saying a word?

Ben froze up. Why, he must be invisible to Eva. Ah, his

inside demon...

- You think I cannot see you. I know everything, and will not bear it any more. This situation, I don't know my status. Am I your wife or your neighbor? Give me a final answer.

- It is exactly as you think it is.

- You go to your Odet and Vazgen in the morning, while I stay idle, jobless, unneeded, having neither a guide, nor a husband.

- It is your business. I am very busy and have no time to keep amused somebody else. Besides, when your husband comes back, ask him for explanations.

- Benjamin? He doesn't give a damn about me. After the death of his mother-in-law he goes to bed at different places, as if he has found another bed because of my snoring.

- But your snoring is unbearable.

- You know, Ben, I will make it hard for you, lest whatever dog should take bread from your hands. They call me Eva.

- Say nothing in advance, lest you should have a chance to defend yourself.

- "ZEDs" have explained to me everything, and I know your secrets.

- "ZEDS", well, what is there, - said Ben.- it is a kind of occupation. Be careful, they never forgive errors. Thanks for warning.

- And be informed that the blind singer came for you.

- What singer?

- Go out into the courtyard and see. Your every step is under surveillance.

- What is it they want?

- You will see. Perhaps they want you to clear the field.

Ben heard the clanking of the door lock and slipped out unnoticed, lest he should meet Benjamin. Mechanically, from the entrance window he noticed a suspicious movement on the roof of the fourteen-floor building on the other side of the street. One moment he noticed a red dot on his chest and squatted rapidly. It was a sign of a sniper. Why he didn't pull the trigger, was unclear. Perhaps he was unsure it was Ben. He is now at the

entrance, waiting for his appearance. Ben climbed the ninth floor, took the key to the roof from a tenant, opened the door and went to the top. Two figures appeared behind a pile with two optical rifles fixed their eyes on the entrance. He stepped on the roof through the end entrance. The snipers did not look at his side. Maybe they want to kill Benjamin. But what for? Anyway, they murder people right and left nowadays.

In the yard a ragged man in dark glasses, tall and aged, was slowly drawing an old song. He was singing and gathering small change thrown from the upper floors, getting the coins by touch with trembling hands and putting them into a bag. He moved to Benjamin's entrance and rapidly changed the tonality of his song. It was "A Karabakh Man" by Hrachia Beglarian. People gathered in a courtyard pavilion laughed aloud:

- Hey, old man, change your song, no one will give money for the "Karabakh Man" these days.

Laughter again filled the whole courtyard.

Seeing no drams falling down, he sang an aria from the opera "Arshak II" He turned his face toward Benjamin's window. Ben got out of the exit, slipped slowly around the beggar, and spilled coins with loud ringing. The people in the pavilion heard the metal coins fall on the asphalt and all started looking up at the balconies. Hearing the falling coins, the beggar started collecting the money without stopping his song. Ben noticed that he was not touching the ground anymore, but collected the coins in precise movements. A luxury jeep suddenly screeched its breaks close to the beggar. The crazy rap from inside the jeep suppressed the sound of the beggar's song. However he continued singing.

- Ben, I am a ghost from Shooshee, - said the singing beggar without facing Ben, remember, I met you in my courtyard.

- Yes, now have you been sent by "ZED"?

- Have you heard about MJ12?

- Not too much. I know very little.

-They are planning to start a new crisis using the mortgage banks.



- What can I do?
- Many are interested in you. Try to stop.
- I am out of it all now.
- What do you know about “ZED”?
- Nothing.
- Then forget about it. It does not exist. Otherwise you will get into trouble.
- Isn't it the same as MJ12? Well, being a ghost, why have you got this role?
- I dedicate song to people. I have always dreamt about singing for people.
- And can you materialize?
- I understand nothing of this stuff. But it is possible that ghosting is being controlled from some center.

Men from the pavilion called:

- Hey, come here, old man.

The ghost walked towards them with difficulty.

- We will give you a thousand drams each, see, we are six men here, only don't sing not to spoil peoples taste. See, the young men love rap, and only in English. The Armenian is out of fashion, ha, ha, ha...

- I don't want that money, - refused the beggar.
- What they throw from windows is money, but ours is not so, is it?

- The matter is I cannot accept what I have not earned.
- No, you did, because we have also listened to you.
- You have not listened, again objected the beggar.
- See now, you, philosopher, take this money and be off, never come to this place, said one of the guys in a husky and threatening voice shoving the money into the beggar's pocket. - Clear out!

The beggar returned the money to the men of the pavilion. One grabbed his arm. The beggar squeezed his arm with his free hand.

- Ouch! He is breaking my arm, yelled the man.
- Hey, it is none of your business, let him sing as much as he wants.-Hey, just see how strong he is, if you are that strong, go

and make money that way.

Next moment Ben looked up. There was no one on the roof. It seems, what they wanted was to get him scared. They showed that they could kill. They must be sure they have killed something within him.

## CHAPTER 4

### OBSERVERS

Ben was gliding along the city streets, watching the people moving around, trying to forget Eva's poisonous reproaches. He started to monitor the motor vehicle traffic, to look for familiar faces. Agitation in the city was above the usual. The city reminded of a caldron filled with a heavy boiling liquid, with the cooks out of sight. The cascade was showing a concert attended by children and their parents, while the way to Matenadaran, the depository of ancient manuscripts, was crowded with demonstrators gathered for a meeting. In a smart move Ben landed at the side of the Academy of Fine Arts. He saw a young man squatted close to trash dumpsters. He was grazing on some food remnants enthusiastically. It was dinner time. Ben saw that on the other end of the dumpster a huge dog jumped in. The bum raised his head, saw the dog, mumbled what could be something like a greeting, with an imperceptible smile. The man's and dog's glances met. The dog tried to find out in a fleeting glance, if the man's attitude had not changed, then, feeling that everything was as before, continued to scavenge. The bum who could in no way tear off the remnants of meat from the bone, the teeth being not what they used to be, had a momentary look at Ben. No one had seen him, but here, the bum did. How was it that he dropped to the bottom of society? I see. He was an engineer. The plant was closed, he

couldn't find another job. Tried to go in for commerce, even tried the currency exchange business, but they kicked him out. He was a complete failure. He could only make good structures, dreaming about drawings nights, then waking up at once, putting it down and making sure in the morning that it was an invention. His colleagues and department chief were envious, persecuted him in every way. There was no one to appreciate his talent. He generated new ideas every day. The plant manager complained at a meeting that that designer gave him a lot of trouble. Here, his design was materialized in a serial production, isn't that enough? The Socialist system does not favor continuous change. It is not capitalism with its competition. A quiet life, there is nothing better. When his design brought a big premium award from the center, he was not included in the bonus list. The engineer was offended and went out of service. The manager signed his order of dismissal with no regret. Thus a great engineer was gradually demoted to the garbage dump. One day he drove out dogs, cats and their rival bums from the dump and started to host it alone. He found delicious pieces of meat and decided that they were his. He was not interested, who the country's President was, why people gathered on the squares, made meetings. There were times when he went to the Theater Square, shook his fist and shouted: Karabakh, reunion! It seemed to him that the guys coming to power from the podium of the meetings will take a note and appreciate him. Then he went to fight in Karabakh, was wounded in combat, barely evaded being taken prisoner. Again came down to the bottom of society. Thank God, they still leave something for the dump. He heard that in Germany there is no food at the dumps, since the Germans are thrifty, buy no excess food, so there is no waste. However lately some bum interested in politics and still hoping to socialize, although there have been no precedents, said that soon they will import a trash-processing plant from Japan, so the bums will stop enjoying the dump. He used to pick up scraps of paper from the dump, carefully folded them, put them away, classified in a quiet corner, and read. He used to say that thousands of bums will be denied using the wasted food. He

even planned to establish a bums' union, to call up a bums' protest rally in case of need, he even wanted to call on the population to never eat up all the food there is, but to leave some to them, since they are also sons of God, and have the right to survive. Imagine ten thousand bums gathered at Theater Square, what smell would come from that crowd, only God knows. Perhaps a humor-oriented President of the country will order to concentrate them in groups and take them to the bathroom, and to feed them free for a few days in the mushroomed cafes, saying: let us see you making a meeting with your bellies full.

When the bum's and Ben's eyes met, a luxury car stopped close to the trash dump, and someone threw a plastic bag from the car towards the dump. It passed over the dump and descended on the head of the bum eating the last crumbs of a chicken. Instead of taking offense, the bum received it as a Gift of God, looked at the luxury car, looked at the disdainful smile of the driver, grabbed the sac, although no competition was in view, tore it and examined the inside, then threw it off in disappointment.

A little further on, there was a woman sitting close to another trash dumpster, with long disheveled hair. Sitting at her feet was a topless man talking to her very insistently.

- Take that thing of yours and put it in your ass, understand?  
- shouted the woman.

It seemed that the woman wanted the passersby to hear, to show that although she was a bum, but had her dignity as a woman, would not die for every "thing", having her right of choice.

When Ben was coming back, he deliberately slowed his pace, whether he walked or slid in the desired direction, in order to see the bums. The man was lying in the shade of the dumpster, while the woman rose from her place with difficulty, opened and shook off the black rag used as a sheet, covering the man's back with care. Then made a few steps rocking sideways. Ben sorted out that the woman was an invalid. It was clear that her parents could not provide her with medical care, or

perhaps mother left her in an orphanage and disappeared.

Two girls were walking, filling the neighborhood with the sound of their laughter. Only one moment, when the ice-cream was coming to the mouth, the laughing subsided; they tried to bite off a possibly large piece, and went on with their contagious laughter. A beggarly woman in a blue dress made a pitiful face, tilted her head and asked for bread money. The girls carried away by their laughter took no notice of her. One of them dumped the ice-cream wrapper. The beggarly woman grabbed it instantly. Ben thought that she was trying to correct the mistake of the girl who was littering the street, so as to take it to the nearest trash bin. However the beggar started to scrape off the traces of chocolate on the paper using the ice-cream stick and putting it to her lips. She blinked her eyes, maybe the taste of chocolate took her to sweet remembrance of her childhood, when her parents bought her choc-ice on a stick, and she would full-heartedly laugh while enjoying it, without ever suspecting that one day destiny will deprive her of everything. The beggar seemed inclined to imbibe the chocolate and ice-cream, or rather their molecules, individually. Ben thought that the woman enjoyed the dumped remnants much more than the girl eating the whole ice-cream. The girls seemed to be in a hurry to do away with the ice-cream, lest it should interfere with their happy chatter, while the beggarly woman scraped the paper with her tongue.

Ben thought that it was just there that the have-nots had the advantage over the haves. At the same moment he remembered the old dervish who asked a vendor for a nut. The vendor wanted to fill his bag with nuts, but the dervish took only one, saying that the nut would last him for a week. Ben knew that he would eat the nut in tiny bits, to distribute it evenly in his whole body. He watched and controlled his body. The beggarly woman of Yerevan had attained the same degree...

Ben knew that at the street corner close to the food store there was a forty-year-old beggar standing with a leg bent backwards, a crutch under his arm, begging for money. From some distance away Ben saw him argue with a stout young

man. Then he took a thick round pack of money from his inner breast pocket, pulled out two money bills, and gave them to the young man, the latter withdrew very pleased. It was clear to Ben: the fat belly was the “seer” of the street beggars gathering compulsory tribute from the beggars in exchange for their unhindered practice. The beggar again adopted his habitual appearance, bent his leg backwards, grabbed his cane and addressed Ben.

- Give me money for bread, dear brother.

- I will give you bread money, - said Ben, but first let us join money in my pocket and in yours, then go halves. You will gain.

- What do you say, - said the beggar, a cunning smile playing on his face, - in this way I lose.

The beggar guffawed.

Ben laughed, too. Looked around and was uncertain for a moment. He heard noise on two sides. On the left it was the noise from the Cascade. Here thousands of children gathered with their parents, at one place there was a vivid show, at the stature of a huge cat there was another audience of adolescents listening to a concert. A noise on another side reminded of the year 1988.

Ben remembered. The Children's Day.

- Brother, - called the beggar, - come for a moment, I have something to say: - Ben came closer. - You seem to be a decent man. Perhaps you are in trouble, let me help you.

- Will you give me money? asked Ben.

- No, but I can help you so that you will have a lot of money.

- It is interesting, - said Ben.

- A little way up there, close to doughnuts place, we haven't yet found the right man; it is a better place than this one here. You seem to be good for the job.

- But they will recognize me, it is not too good.

- Recognize, ha, who will recognize? - he examined Ben's face, oh, yeah, you have been on TV.

- I am a writer.

- Well, I know, brother, every dog in the street knows you. But that can be helpful, they will know you: “a writer goes

begging”, more folk will cough up. Listen, this is business, and it is good business. I am going to be your “seer”, you will pay me tax.

- Good, I will think, - answered Ben.

- Do think, it is good business, a hundred bucks a day will be small change for you. We don't say it to everyone. Don't repent later. I will see to it, no police will say a word to you.

- What about the TV or press, they will come to talk and to take pictures.

- So much the better. Many will come to see you. Everyone will be eager to contribute. They will queue up for you, sure, what is your name?

- Ben.

- Oh, Ben, the second name is quite good, too. Ben Nengalyan. A real name for a pauper.

- Ben Bengalyan, - corrected Ben.

- It is the same. Do you want me to do it now? - The beggar started to rummage his pocket, at last he got a mobile phone, pushed a button and put it to his ear. He spoke in a high-pitched voiced, nearly yelling, - Chief, it is me, the Benefactor, I got a man for the Doughnut place, the best. Let him take a stand for a few days, we shall see. It is OK, I shall see him. You don't worry, you'll get your due. Don't tell the Boss. A good option. He put the phone in his pocket and said to Ben: - I talked to him, you can come tomorrow. You must know, the place costs money, but you don't worry, I am buying the place.

- How much do they want?

- It's OK, I am buying the place, it is my problem, you will get a salary, bonus, etc. Well, is it OK? You will get so much money that you get your books printed. You must have a lot of books to be printed.

- Yes, so what...

- Well, I know everything, brother, come tomorrow, we shall try on your clothes. You will need special clothes. And the great wizard of that business is me, this is a show, a one-man show. A tiny mistake, and they will blow you out. And don't worry , the Doughnut seer is me.

- How is it, the Doughnuts has a seer?

- I say, brother, are you not of this world? Everything has a "seer". Who is the seer of this country, do you know? Kojgo, isn't he? And who has given to him the seer's writ? The top banana.

- President of the country?

- No, my dear, President is zilch. The system of seeing is everywhere, the Government, too, appoints the seers. Who is the head of your local administration? The same seer, a minister, deputy, commander, manager, politician, all are the seers. See, brother, they have taken it from us, simply don't admit, so they put other names on those things. Well, let us drop that high-flown nonsense. You learn new things every day. But there is one more thing you want to know: if they come tomorrow and rip the Doughnuts, who is to answer, do you know? But the seer is me. If you work proper, we make you the seer. Last year they ripped the food store close by. They came asked me to see again. I say, it is not my own business, there is no seer unless you get the writ from the slammer. We got the link, they gone to the slammer, pleaded... Well, it is none of your business, brother, come tomorrow, start working. A good place.

- One must think.

- Think-mink is trash. I always see you this side of the street. The Chief knows now, if you flip, no good.

- How is that, no good?

- Oh, nothing, you can go. But if something is on tomorrow, we don't know you.

Ben dematerialized, slipped above, passed the roof tops, and slowly came down to the paved street. Loud calls were coming from the Matenadaran area. Someone was shouting through the public address system:

- Im-peach-ment, Im-peach-ment...

The common mass of the people were indifferent and overwhelmed. Twenty years before there was no place to stand here. The tail of the meeting reached the movie house "Nairi". And the presidential contender shouted: Fight to the end! It soon became clear however that the smart speakers of the meetings do not retain the same smartness when the matter comes to



leading the country. Their mistakes were something that soon became quite evident. As dictated from the outside, when democratization demanded tangible sacrifices, and behind all that, one could feel a trap made up by the perfidious Turkish diplomacy, they shut down the only reliable source of energy in the country, the Nuclear Power Plant of Metsamor, making the population shiver with cold and cut off the forests. The people were disappointed in those whom they had unreservedly believed. Now nobody believed. During the election the people gave their votes to someone, but those votes used to be assimilated by those in power. In the recent past one of the statesmen used to say: "Whatever you do, if you give a hundred-percent vote to one person at least, it is all the same, it is all of us who are the decision makers. Now that impudence is nothing doing, now it is just looting, as they say, they will fill your shoes in no time.

Ben remembered the meetings of 1988. He felt in those days the united power of a hundred thousand people, creating sort of a magnetic field in the Theater Square. The same idea of unity created a field that overpowered everything else. What was to be said from the site, had to be correlated with the field. It had become a single entity of a hundred thousand. If someone's speech disagreed with the field, the crowd booed him out of the movement for good. It was there that the concept of state was formed. Of course the collective intellectual product that was extracted during the meeting at the site could not become the government that could take the state to victories and fame. However the Nation was unified and those unified ideas was what made it ready for war. So that despite the weak-minded government in office the Nation defeated the Aggressor. And when the time came to establish the governing organism with the interacting systems in its entirety, the governing mind started to give out flops. Ben remembered that when he wanted to strike home to the statesmen that the country's wealth is not gold mines or oil deposits, but rather setting in motion the minds of the people according to their capacities within the different spheres of the governing mechanism, he was jeered and

eventually ignored. And when he started talking and writing about corruption and dissolution of morals, shaking the country's foundations, he was openly kicked out from all quarters.

He walked through the gaps in the crowd thinking about the public movement. The Kremlin was pressing: complain, demand, it is your right of way. Ben was in the inner struggle and could see no entire picture. When the complete information was gathered from the four corners of the earth, he could view the whole picture. The role of the Artsakh Movement was to deflect the universal attention from the program developed by the great powers.

And their main purpose was to dismember the adjacent Iran. The Kremlin approved of this program, since it would annex the North of Iran, Atrpatakan. It was for this reason that they agreed to wake up the sleeping giant, the national question that had so much horrified the Empire. But that was a trap prepared by the Secret World Government for the USSR, since that Communist Empire not only disobeyed their decisions, but were also unpredictable and strove to become the World Government themselves.

It was this situation that prompted the CIA to penetrate into the Kremlin, to take the controls in their own hands, and to introduce their own people at important points. And so, quite unexpected for Moscow, the problem of Iran loomed largely, and the Empire confronted the awakened giant face-to-face, what started to torment it from within. The Armenians managed to make use of the arising situation, following the collapse of the USSR, they remained one on one with the Baku authorities. Baku, having no understanding of the situation, relying upon their overbalance in manpower and weapons, embroiled in war not only Artsakh, but the Armenian Republic as well. And as is always the case, the spirit won. In the initial period Azerbaijan had to lose only the autonomous territory, however after a heavy military defeat it lost a number of regions. In this way the Armenians liberated one part of their Historical Homeland. It remained to find a common language with the Secret World Government, wherein the Armenians failed. But in reality what is

needed is to correlate in every possible way your specific interests with those of the Great Powers. The Artsakh Movement coincided with the Western interests, since being the first, it was a precursor of the Empire breakdown. However, when the signs of collapse appeared, the West started to reproach Armenia, because it was again being converted into a Russian bridgehead. While the Turkish hazard only stipulated meeting halfway the Russian intentions. Moreover, Russia was the leading power in the region.

However, humanity, being displeased with the kings and the presidents, established a supragovernmental structure that had to oversee the kings, in case of need to remove a specific leader or replace the ruling regime. Benjamin knew about the existence of secret universal governments monitoring every change on the globe, making modifications and corrections if needed. However, what they really are, within what system they are operating remained a mystery for him, so he decided to ask Vazgen about it, perhaps there could be information about that in the network. It should not be forgotten also to ask the leader of the opposition about that. There were rumors that the former President had links with one of the secret governments, and was acting under its orders. But how did he emerge in the political scene? Sitting behind his desk in the library of manuscripts, he was tired of wandering in the labyrinth of ancient languages, and there was no one to talk about all that, so he planned to abandon it all and to rejoin life, all the more so that public unrest started at that time, and then the eyes started to go dim, and out of the dimness there came suddenly a black and at the same time half-lucid creature and started talking to him. Very unexpectedly, first he could not understand what language it was speaking. When he gathered his thoughts, he sorted out the words out of merged sentences, and could see that it spoke in the Acadian language. He thought that perhaps it might be a black-skinned scientist from Oxford University, who had been in a hurry and arrived a month before his time. Subsequently, while analyzing the details of the encounter, he thought that could have been vertigo. He decided never to share it with anyone.

But there was one occasion that he wanted to be consigned to oblivion and classified as an illusion. An instant when he eventually decided to tear himself away from the chair, he stood up whole-length and stretched himself, at that moment there was a rapid movement of a black mass towards him that actually penetrated into his body. The incomprehensible foreign body soothed him from within: "Think of nothing, make no decisions, I will do everything instead of you." Following that occasion, he became more active and aggressive. When he appeared on the Committee, he exerted pressure on everyone. He himself was stunned about his outstanding sexual activity. His wife who had grumbled for years and complained, with eyes that looked outside, quite habitually, tolerating the extra-marital relations, now a happy smile never left her face. When formerly Chief of Logistics offered to bring teen girls for love, he flatly refused. But now he was unable to suppress his passions and reminded the Chief of Logistics of his offer. The latter was happy to render a new service to the boss, to establish new connections, or else, to be fired. He, too, had a lot of problems. In the Interior his former boss Dionis raised his head again, he wanted a new post, but he had not yet revenged himself on him. When he was a simple inspector under his supervision, he fired him from the service for bribery. He will now supply a pretty young girl to his President, and ask to kick out Dionis. That Benjamin is striving to do it. He will also say a few words to the President in his favor. Meanwhile the President thought at times that it was the zeal of the Interior that stimulated the sexual activity, and he promptly reassured himself. There was one thought however that caused him concern: Who was it inside him, a demon, Satan or an angel? However his inner self soon suppressed that thought, forbidding to think about it, or rather, thinking about it caused a sharp headache. He even applied to a doctor specializing in brain capillaries and had pictures taken of the brain. The only thing they said was that some strange phenomena occurred in the brain, but nothing was clear. They offered to go to France for examination. He understood by then that he was not self-contained, that he was overseen, prompted

and controlled from within, and he was employed as a means to run the country. When he got accustomed to his inner entity, he decided to use the occasion and to repress the Dashnak Party. By that time he did not conceal his personal hatred with regard to that party. That hatred came from long ago, since he was in Jerusalem, when the Dashnaks persecuted his father, the leader of Community, so that the whole family was compelled to move to the Soviet Armenia. And he waited patiently for his turn to persecute and to take revenge. And when the moment came, he did not hesitate, though he felt that it was an aggravation of his Presidential position. Meanwhile, Benjamin offered to turn it from the global Armenian-wide party into a national structure. His inner self prompted that his arch enemy was Benjamin. Why? In him there was one who scared and horrified his inner self. Go figure, Satan is afraid of Satan. It is worthwhile to meet him under some pretext. But Benjamin was nothing but a tailor's dummy. An unselfish adherer of Artsakh. A movement of a finger – and he would fly into pieces. Well, put it off, now the crowd is there, anxious to hear what he says.

Ben read the thoughts of the man standing close to the microphone at the site. They swept by with a lightning speed in his brain, so that Ben could hardly perceive them. At last Ben was able to get the integrated mass of ideas and subsequently attempted to decode and to analyze it.

Ben felt that there was some storming activity in his brain. The mind that started operating was that of contradiction and displeasure. It reproached: It is not your business to mess with politics. Life is very rich and engaging, so leave politics to others.

"I wonder if it is inside me. So, he does not like politics. The devils cannot tolerate politics. Then why in the case of Georgik Ter-Abasian Satan goes in for politics? It is a pity that until that occasion there had been no chance to do some reading on the devils. But who knows what kind of creatures they are, what they are and what their purposes are. Maybe they help people, too. As to Lavey, he seems to be a founder of a theory that has

nothing to do with them, and that's it.

Ben was walking on the track to Matenadaran, the ancient manuscript depository, in the midst of a gathered crowd of people; however he had no more feeling of a magnetic field being all around. At first it seemed that he had distanced himself or isolated from the people, or it might be an interior isolation, as if inside the brain some current-carrying gyri cerebri were disconnected from memory, cutting off the feelings. He saw nevertheless that the crowd was not united. They gathered out of curiosity, just to see what was happening.

Many faces were unfamiliar. He remembered that they could not see him. At some moment he came across a familiar face. A pretty girl fixed his eyes on him. Then she looked away. Who was that, I wonder, thought Ben. Remembered with a delay, he met the girl while commuting. So, for her he was visible. In this condition he evaded meeting people. Nothing was clear to him. He did not know whom to address. He felt as if he was left alone. He soared up, then went down to street. A flow of waste water gathered for a moment at his feet. So far the wise men of the city could not resolve the problems of water supply and waste water disposal. He stepped on a bus. There were few passengers. He took a spare seat. A cheerful man was engaged into a vigorous conversation with an elderly man in the next seat.

- It is a good day today, - he said with self-satisfaction. I am going to a funeral feast, to eat my fill then I will hurry to the next funeral, they said, come, we shall give you food to take home. You know, life is good, not a single day without a dead man. All dead man hosts know me and respect.

At a bus stop a young man asked the driver:

-Brother dear, will you take me to Yerord Mas? - he asked.

- No, it is a fixed-run vehicle, I am going to Davitashen, and I cannot switch routs, said the driver.

- I will pay you, we shall ask the passengers, too, I am a Tiflis man, they will not mind.

- What you say is going astern, - answered the driver, - but you can go as far as Shrjanain, it is a big hub.

The young man from Tiflis made himself comfortable and engaged into a long conversation with the passengers.

- Hey, what kind of people are they, cannot marry off a guy, I told my uncle, never go matchmaking without me, when I come, then in one moment, I will convince them all, both the bride and the parents. If I say only a few words, they laugh and do what I say. In Tiflis they also do as I say. They know I am a crazy boy, carry a knife in my pocket, no patter for me, I'll kill them all. The handle is Shota, the whole Tiflis knows me. Once...

- Shota, said the driver, - get off here, you can reach Erord Mas by Numbers 43, 89, or 26.

Shota stepped out through the front door, approached the driver:

- What shall I give you for your kindness, don't be shy, I have a lot of money.

- I want nothing, dear Shota, answered the driver.

- No, brother, no go, do you want me to spray you with cologne?

He got a barber's sprayer out of his pocket, aimed it at driver's face and squeezed the rubber bag. A specific odor of a hairdresser's filled the vehicle. A girl who had perhaps been allergic to the cheap hairdressers' perfumes, started sneezing.

- Listen, I want nothing, this smell is not too good.

- Here's a fine how-d'ye-do! This smell, I spray it on me ten times a day, they love me for that, the Tiflis girls are crazy about it.

- Yeah, I seen quite a few crazy girls in Tiflis, said the driver

- You have been in Tiflis, haven't you, or are you teasing me? hey you want to do some good, but no dice. Those are funny, the folks in Yerevan.

Shota retreated with a sign of disappointment.

A group of pretty and merry girls appeared in the bus. Ben looked at them with all his eyes. Oh, it is again 66, as before, the eyes never leave the girls. Those young men, are they artificial? The girls remain displeased all the time. While the girls that took him company were constantly on the alert lest other women should know the way to the passionate Ben and will take him

away. However, a girl once came up and said: I know what kind of zeal you are hiding inside you. There was no way for Ben to get rid of her. He suddenly remembered her eyes. His gaze met the same eyes and shuddered. Here she was sitting opposite Ben, watching him and smiling. The vehicle trundled on a rough street, and her full breasts were shaking. "My God, those shaking breasts have always driven me crazy, - thought Ben. But how can the girl see Ben? He is invisible for ordinary people, isn't he? He remembered Eva's reproaches and his face darkened. At that time a woman approached, and without waiting for the smiling girl to get up, sat down in her seat, perhaps she could not see her. Of course, she did not notice. But before that the woman had cast a look at the seat. She sat down and vanished from Ben's eyes. The same smiling face was before his eyes.

Of course, it was that girl, Ashkhen, from the TV studio. That love was stormy but short. The merging was so unexpected that both were faced with the fact. However Ashkhen was prepared in advance, she controlled herself suppressing her scream of pain lest the whole TV studio should come running. Now how that love started. Ashkhen never honored Benjamin with her attention, while Benjamin knew that he had no right even to dream about her.

One day Ashkhen addressed Benjamin:

My brother Kojgo has been taken ill, some radio wave has plugged in to his brain, he is reiterating the transmissions on that frequency from first to last. We have shown him to psychologists and psychiatrists, no one can sort out what it all means. People in my department say that only you can help.

- Can it be that a demon came in, - asked Ben half-seriously.
- He says nothing on that score.
- Bring your brother, - said Benjamin, not so much to cure her brother, but rather to create a pretext for getting closer to the enticing Ashkhen.

On the next day Ashkhen presented her brother, who measured Benjamin with uneasy and shifty eyes from the deep eye-pits. Benjamin who had studied the soul-analysis theory by



Zigmund Freud, and sometimes in his stories reverted to the help of that theory, thought that the moment came to apply the theory to practical life. He assaulted Ashkhen's brother at once.

- Listen, you must stop interfering with our radio communication. The whole KGB and the Television are in a mess, the situation has been debated at the Central Committee Bureau.

- Is it my interference? - asked Ashkhen's brother very surprised, on the contrary, broadcasts of the public radio got hold on my brain's frequency and they won't let it go. Do you want me to say the morning issue by heart?

- Hey, stop it, - raised his voice Benjamin, - and I say, what kind of hostile radio is beaming to jam our public radio broadcasts?

- What can I do now, - asked the brother in a confused voice.

- I don't know. Well, let us arrange it in this way: I will say nothing to the TV State Committee Chairman, or else, you know what they will do, although it is my responsibility, for Ashkhen's sake I give you a deadline of three days.

- Three days is not enough time to disconnect your brain from radio communication, - answered the brother, - but I can cut it off in a week.

- Benjamin, please, help my brother, asked Ashkhen.

- OK, - agreed Benjamin with feigned reluctance, - if in a week's time it doesn't stop, I will report the matter to the Committee on State Security. The rest of the things is not my responsibility.

After a few days Ashkhen said:

- My brother is cured, asks what he can do for Benjamin.

- Let him do good things for you, - said Benjamin.

- For me? - if he does no bad things, I will be thankful.

- Why, is he so evil?

- When he was taken ill, those were good days for our family, he stopped persecuting us, since he was busy with his radio waves.

- Are you sorry that he was cured?

- Yes. - He is now demanding to be brought to you again.

- What does he want?

- He says: Benjamin knows the secrets of my mind, therefore he mustn't live.

- It is interesting, - said Ben. Sultan Hamid had the Armenian doctor executed who had helped his wife at child-bearing, saying that the doctor that had seen his wife's uterus, mustn't live.

- He is becoming public hazard from day to day, said Ben, - he does not think about what he does. He does the first thing that comes to his mind.

- It seems that God sent that disorder so that he start dealing with it and do no evil.

- I took pity on him, what can I do? But one day he will kill me and my sister Anoosh.

Ashkhen related that when a young boy, brother Kojgo was distinguished for his active behavior. When they showed him to a psychiatrist, he said: "These boys usually become thieves or boxers. That is a good outcome, for in the former case his doings will become public knowledge, while the latter is more preferable. But if he goes into politics, he will become a public disaster". Ashkhen asked for examples, the psychiatrist indicated Stalin, Hitler, Alexander the Great. "So, my brother is going to become another Stalin", - asked Ashkhen. "I think that he will be very hazardous for the general public, - said the doctor, - science has no ready-made prescriptions. What remains is to rely on God".

For Ben, many episodes in Ashkhen's life remained enigmatic. Ashkhen was like a very experienced lover. There was no sofa in the small and narrow office, so the lovers accommodated themselves on a chair. Ashkhen used to sit on Benjamin's knees. Meanwhile Ben had difficulty with coming, which fascinated the passionate Ashkhen. Initially their relationships were based exclusively on passion. Later Ben was delighted with watching Ashkhen's face during the moments of enjoyment. Benjamin and Ashkhen gradually came to an understanding that they were held together not only by passion and desire. Ashkhen kept saying that she was in love for the first

time ever. Benjamin thought it was improbable, with regard to her outstanding beauty and wide opportunities for choosing lovers. He felt the incessant attention to her person on the part of the males every minute.

Then suddenly Ashkhen disappeared. As if she has never been. No one knew where she was. Then Ben thought it had been a dream. As if he lost half of his own self, the meaning of his life. He had never assumed that he had loved Ashkhen so much, that she had taken such a big place in his life. He tried to fill in her absence by TV broadcasts, films, stories...

Benjamin even thought that he would kill the man that Ashkhen would love. He said that if he loved someone, he must have three children with that one. Why did he say that? Benjamin thought that if he loved Ashkhen, he must wish that she should be happy. But he cannot give her happiness, since society will not permit this relationship. "Why should either your beloved or you suffer only because I cannot make you happy", - said Ben. He remembered that he had often thought of going beyond the veil. Isn't it the best solution? However some confront him, like his son, daughter, the political atmosphere around his Artsakh, his home land. The best option was to suppress love. "I will give a kiss to Knar, Zhznik, Anna... and love for Ashkhen will die a slow, cruel death".

And then one day all of a sudden Ashkhen appeared in front of him, on the other side of the metal barrier.

When one day he went to the Sevan mental hospital for filming, in the company of the American orthopedist Vardkes, the latter scheduled to raise money for the mental home through TV coverage from the American Armeniency, he heard a familiar voice from the other side of the grid.

- Be-e-n, Be-e-n.

Benjamin froze from surprise. On the other side of the grid was Ashkhen.

- Ashkhen', Ashkhe-e-n!

- No, Benjamin, take it easy, I am not your Ashkhen, I am her twin sister, you know me.

- Where is Ashkhen? - asked Ben.

- Escaped to Russia. She got rid of persecution by our brother Kojgo, while I failed to escape, and he put me into madhouse, so as to have free access to our share of property. Deliver me from this place, Benjamin, Ashkhen said only you can save me. She had told me everything. So, one day I replaced her. You never noticed. You only said that I had changed a lot. Do you remember? It was me. When you deliver me, I am yours... Believe me, Ben, I am not crazy. Of people staying here, forty percent are healthy people, the rest have gone crazy here. Simply it is a convenient place for isolation. But I cannot go mad. Or else, it would be easy.

- Say your name.

- I am Anoosh, second name is Arkaian. Put it down lest you forget. My second name is not quite fit for a madhouse, but it is OK, just get me out of here.

- OK, Anoosh, I will try, - answered Ben.

The mental home manager agreed to put to rights Anoosh's papers and to release her in one week, as he put it, from the mental health institution, however, what part of that madhouse was health, remained a mystery. Benjamin had to come and take Anoosh in a week's time.

One week later, when Benjamin came to the madhouse again, the manager who had evidently seen him from the window, came to see him in at the entrance, gave him something wrapped in cloth.

- Two days after your TV crew was gone, there was an outage during the night, - said the manager in a guilty tone, a heavily built man with fat cheeks, - when the blackout happened, or maybe it was a rotational power cutoff, I told them a thousand times to remove the mental hospital from the list of rotational cutoffs, they said OK, but never did, well, now the times are funny, you never know what will happen tomorrow, and poor Anoosh... the emergency power plant courtyard was empty, no one knows what madman had removed fuel, the two women lying at Anoosh' both sides, who were specifically asked to look after Anoosh, perhaps had been waiting for this occasion, and probably it was not the first time, there were two other times,

when they found a body torn to pieces, so, under the general hue and cry, you see, this is a madhouse, they simply assaulted Anoosh and devoured her in the rough, ate up the poor girl sensu stricto. In the general confusion no one heard the poor Anoosh's cries for help. True, some remember some appeals for help, but they were disregarded, since every third person was calling for help. The poor Anoosh was eaten by cannibalistic women.

- What is the penalty due to the cannibals by law?

- None whatsoever, we keep them in high-security environment, but that is rather formal.

- What if they eat someone else tomorrow?

Nothing can be done about it. There is no penalty for the mentally ill. If you show me the law, I will hand them over. They cannot be charged.

- If they had planned it beforehand, it means they are not mad, - said Benjamin. Cross them off the register and charge them with the premeditated murder.

- Yes, but at the time of the event they were under the status of the crazy, answered the manager of the madhouse. - I wrote you a letter, you must have not received it...

On his way back, Benjamin remembered the day when Ashkhen behaved in a queer way. When at the moment of passion, as usual, Benjamin whispered in the ear of his mistress the most vulgar words, which had made Ashkhen even more passionate, that time she took offense and did not let him come near any more. Then only he understood that on that day the twin sister, Anoosh, replaced Ashkhen. Possibly, Ashkhen had explained all the details to her sister, however she failed to instruct her on Benjamin's vulgar language, that produced such a pleasant effect on the ears of his mistress. Anoosh was caught unawares and the secret was nearly unlocked. However, she gathered up, jumping up on Benjamin's knees, embracing her sister's lover with a gentle smile and dispelling all his doubts. On the next day Ben asked Ashkhen about her funny conduct, she said she was not feeling too well. In three months' time Benjamin and Ashkhen were so well adapted to using the office

chairs, and the chair was so conveniently fitted to their mighty passions, that when they had an opportunity to make love in bed, it was a complete disaster, so that they had to go to the chair again.

And so, Ashkhen is sitting in front of Ben. She has almost remained unchanged. It looked suspicious to Ben. Then she must be Ashkhen's daughter, thought Ben. The girl cast an Ashkhenian-type meaningful glance at Benjamin, got out of a car in an elegant motion, stepping forward with assuredness. Ben followed her. The same step. She walked as if demonstrating a full range of her lust, love, sex, temptation. The girl stopped. Ben approached.

- Ashkhen, - said Ben with no stress, as if it was not a name, but a very meaningful expression.

- I recognized you at once, - said the girl, - mother has told me all about you.

Ben held the girl's hand, at this moment they took off, soaring madly across the boundless fields, mountains and waters, appearing above a bottomless ravine. The view was both familiar and unfamiliar to Ben. Everything reminded of Tartar Valley, however, he had never seen it from such a height. True, during the war he had several times cut and gone through old Trtuakan, however it was at the upper reaches of the river, towards Haterk. Once because of cloud cover the river flow was reversed, and near Karvajar the Aggressor fired a volley of bullets. It was clear that bullets made a large opening in the body of the flying machine, however, thank God, it blew over that time. While Ben from a round window viewed the beautiful scenery of Armenia's Tsar area. Down below was the famous Dadivank, Havots Tar, Handaberd, Chapni, Jermajoor... At the time of mountain formation the unbridled forces of the earth must have rolled the rocky mountains with such great power, imparting the cliffs with inimitable plastic forms, that would dwarf any abstract-oriented sculptor with all his art and imagination.

In the inner flow of Trtuakan, nature is gentle and kind. A giant wedge-formed cliff seems to have cut into a dip between the two rivers. It dawned upon Ben that it was his native

Jraber. The Tartar and the Trghoot, rushing madly down from the mountains, beat against the cliffs, becoming more ferocious before mixing together. Ben and the girl locked in an embrace, merging like the abundant rivers. Love and passion reigned in the ancient fortress.

- Mother told me to find you and to love you, whispered the girl, - and told me of the ways to love you.

Ben answered nothing. He was afraid to deviate and to lose track, was afraid to pressure the memory, which could pierce not only the thoughts, but also love and desire, could turn off the concentration of mind.

- Don't talk, say nothing.

- I see, my love, you are exactly the story told by your mother, the same crazy and passionate. But I came to bridle you. You must be mine only.

- I am "66".

- O, there is one figure missing, said the girl.

- First, last or in the middle?

- I award you with a new sixer, put it where you wish, the result will not change.

- If it were in my hands...

- You don't know what happened.

- There was some odd thing that happened in our lives. The strange thing is, people do not see me, nor hear... I am not sure if I am or I am not.

- You are, very real and strong.

- But I have been writing a novel...

- Now live your novel and enjoy it, it is a great deal, isn't it? The number, put it in the right place, it is the number for the two of us, 666...

- Does your mother know about the devil inside me?

- No, mother is around no more. It was her order: wherever you are, to find and to love, to give all that she could not have given herself. I know it now, she was right, you never change. You are the same as when you were 18. You are forever.

Ben fell into reverie for a moment. He hesitated.

- There is something haunting you.

- Your mother had a mole. Show it, that I believe you.
- You don't want too much.
- I want to see what has been mine at the start.
- Prove it.
- Ashkhen was a gift of God to me.
- That's right.
- You are her mockup, so you must have the same mole.
- I am the standard model.
- Was your mother a copy?
- Both mother and me are copies of a common forerunner.
- Show me your mole.
- Don't make haste, you will see it in due time.
- You too, let Satan get inside yourself?
- Say nothing...
- Was it their love, or ours?
- Do not get engaged with them, don't exorcise, they only bring help.
- They oversee and manage. If I make sure it is so, I'll kill myself.
- It is impossible. You cannot dive off a bridge.
- Why? O, yes...
- I will help you in every possible way, in the name of love, in the name of Ashkhen and Anoush...
- Do you know about the fate of Anoush?
- I know, and I am looking for her female killers.
- There are no traces of them in the archives, - said Ben, then he fixed his gaze on the girl's eyes, - tell me the truth, am I dead? What has happened? If I had died, I would have known it, at least had a presentiment. My link with the underworld goes back quite a long time.
- What link is yours?
- Dreams. It was by hunting the dreams that I learned how to write.
- You mean the subconscious?
- They follow us from the other world using dreams, our dreams, getting information on our world through flows of the unconscious, if needed, they use the same dreams, the flows of



the unconscious, to pass certain thoughts to us.

- Mother loved you like crazy.
- Why did she say nothing about her oppressor?
- Had he known about you, he would have eaten you raw.
- My God, then he had eaten Anoush, and stowed it on those

women. We will find him.

- He was with the revolutionary leaders and nothing would stop him.

- Now, too, at the helm of the Nation?
- Very powerful. The Nation is in his hands.
- I know your uncle Kojgo. I cured his disease.
- Mother told me. He is now a full-blown boss and master of the country.

- Let us start hunting.

- Sure. You and me are more powerful, - said the girl. - Do you see the temple?

- The temple of my forefathers.
- What is its name?
- The temple of Eritsmankats.
- Your forefathers couldn't have done better finding a place for the temple.

- Those river-valley people used to be called Kiomer while the fortress was named Jrabyrd, it was part of the Diutakan city, - explained Ben, - the city spread out on the other side, there was a draw-bridge connecting to the fortress.

- What about the other one that we saw from above?

-Jrvshtik at the time of Sun worshippers was called Ners-Mihr, the Christians named it by the name of Apostle Elisha.

-Elisha, I wonder if there was an Apostle by that name.

- The sacrificed disciples of Tatevos the Apostle were called the Apostles by the Armenians. Vachakan the Blessed, King of the Armenian West, erected an obelisk and called a church in his name.

- I want to wed in church.

- What church?

- Thank you for not asking with who.

- That is the next question.

- A meaningless question, isn't it? I can have another choice.
- Never forget my 66 at your 18.
- Never forget our 666, said the girl.

Ben and the girl giggled happily.

- So, to the Eritsmankants Church. Grandmother all the way from Tonashen to Mets Shen was looking towards the Church crossing herself and saying: "Blessed be your face, the Holy Church...": Shall we call the fairies?

- No, only the two of us.

- No witnesses, priests?

- Ben, we need no one. What is important is us, our love and the whole world.

- Oh, yes, I forgot that ordinary people cannot even hear us.

- Nor see. Ben, are we going to continue with our love in hell?

- Why in hell? Your idea of the Underworld is not quite right. The two of us will go to paradise. As to hell, it is hardly possible to enjoy love there. Since it is only in Eden that people are able to be happy, i.e. to love, to make love freely, to enjoy passion and love... and if you get onto a green valley of Paradise, you will see, how the couples love each other and enjoy bliss.

- You will say now that they smoke pot, inject drugs...

- Sure, Narghile is there, take it up and go.

- Have you seen all that?

- Of course, dreams can take you anywhere.

- But I thought that paradise is like a catholic cloister where people pray day and night, meekly fulfill the will of the lay sisters. Your description reminds of Itaca Ulisses.

- Yes, it seems that Homer in his young years spent some time in Paradise, saw it all, and took his hero to that island.

- It is interesting; it must be quite a new idea of hell and paradise. That is more to my liking. I am sure I will be happy there, too.

- I know now what Anahit was like, said Ben.

- What Anahit ? - Ashkhen was anxious to know.

- When I saw your mother for the first time, it seemed that I had seen her. Then in the madhouse I saw your aunt, and then

your face. I do remember now. All the three of you are like the gold ingot of Anahit in the British Museum, or, more precisely, you are her copies.

- Perhaps even clones, said Ashkhen, - Ben, dear, you go, I am sleepy. I need rest. I will find you later.

Ashkhen closed her eyes and slept deeply.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE PAGANS

Every time when appearing in Jraber, Ben intended to find the Waterthieves road, where the defenders of the besieged fortress took water from the river unsuspected by the enemy, however each time something happened to hinder that plan. Thinking that the situation was ripe, he slid down on the dilapidated structures of the fortress, where beating against the cliffs roared the ferocious Tartar. Its tribute Trgoot, that was nonetheless ferocious, joining the old Trtuakan skirting Jrabyrd, flowed down with great noise. The cliffs converged strangling the river on both sides. It was there that rising up from the foaming Tartar was a hollow bridged with a vault. Ben sorted out that it was the way of the water thieves whereby the besieged carried water. It was told that once the Turkish troops were determined to besiege the fortress as long as it would take the defenders to starve and surrender. However, the Armenians, to make a show for the enemy, started to blow off flour purging it against the wind. The Turkish commander, seeing that and thinking that the besieged Armenians had a large stock of flour, raised the siege and left in great frustration. In actual fact, however, the besieged were blowing off white sand.

Those images were appearing in front of Ben and disappearing at once.

Facing the fortress, on the right bank of the river, on the Karapets' stony slopes there was the ancient city of Diutakan,

with the seat of Vachakanian wealth. The fortress and the city were linked together by a suspended wooden bridge leaning upon the closely converging cliffs. In front of Ben the bridge descended, crossing the bridge, there came up a city of the early Middle Ages. People from every quarter were heading towards Pandalion Church. The Royal Priest Ter-Manase was telling the gathering about the Big Assembly invited by the King. From all parts of the country arriving to the Capital Diutakan were Partav's Archbishop Shupaghisho, Kapaghak Bishop Manasseh, Hashu Bishops Anania and Sahak, Bishop Pod of Unik, Priest Matte of Darahoj, Priest Abikaz of Beth, Priest Urbatair of Manuche, Priests Hovel, Pap, Mige, Hacob, Patriarch Bakour of Kaghankatuik, and other princes and warriors. The court priest told that the blessed Grigoris – grandson of Gregory the Illuminator, who had been appointed Bishop in Albania, taking with him Martyr Zakharia's blood and relics of Saint Pandalion, went to the land of the Mascouts, where he came up before King Sanesan, and then started to preach the Creative Power of the Trinity, the incorporation of the only begotten Son, His crucifixion and death, then the Resurrection and Ascension to heaven, and then the second coming, the Judgment of the Dead and of the Living. He preached urging the looters not to go to Armenia for plundering, to gain only by one's own labor. The king of Mascouts says: "If we are deprived of the Armenian booty, then how are we going to survive?": They caught the young Grigoris, tied up to an angry horse's tail and let it go on the Chol field at the Caspian shore. His company of disciples along with the relics of saints brought the Holy Martyr's body to Amaras city of the district of Haband, and buried it at the church built by his grandfather.. However they never put a cross, nor any memorial at that place, lest the Pagans should demolish it. And then their King Vachakan, decided to find the relics of the blessed preacher and of the saints, dispatched messages to all clergy and men of power in the country ordering them to gather at his Diutakan palace. Priest Matte from Darahoj brought relics of the Great Grigor and of the martyrs Hripsime and Gayane given by the Armenian Catholicos. King Vachakan with Queen

Shushan, courtiers and clergy went to see them in. From every group of clergy was the sweet smell of the burnt incense. There went around sweet sounds of psalmody. The king gave solemn greetings to the arrivals and the great variety of the relics of Saints. "I know for sure that through Great Girgor God will give me the most Holy Relics of Saint Grigoris", - said the devout King. So, along with this multitude Vachakan moved towards Amaras to seek the relics of the Saint. The abundant rain of spring came, and the King demanded that the Queen go back. However, the Queen asked him to let her enjoy more of seeking the relics of Saint Martyr. With them in a specially ornamented carriage they also carried relics of saints with the seal of Catholicos.

Ben was going with them to look for Grigoris' grave. He had visited the Church of Amaras many times, had known the location of the grave, and was looking for an occasion to help them. And the pretext turned up. Vachakan ordered priest Matte to go to the Church of Darahoj, to deliver a mess there, and to ask God for more help. When the weary priest was dozing, Ben said to his ear. "If you want to find the grave of Grigoris the Martyr, dig at the Eastern part of the Church": Matte immediately returned to Amaras to inform the King of what he had heard. And so, they dug and found the bones of the Holy Martyr as well as the relics of the saints who were with him. The joy of the King, and his company of clergymen, courtiers and laymen was enormous. With the same solemnity the king returned to his Diutakan palace bringing with him the relics of the saints.

Ben entered the palace with the King. Also with the King was Archbishop Partavi, who was Gargar by nation, or as they call themselves, the Lezgins.

- Holy Father, said Vachakan, - I know that you are named in the honor of our holy Apostle Eghishe, therefore I love you so much.

- Yes, long live the King, only we, being guttural talkers, we have difficulty pronouncing your sounds, and our people pronounce it as Shuphaghshi.

Ben slid up from ancient Diutakan, for him there was no difference, where to go, therefore he surrendered to the destiny. In the valley below, there was a huge medieval castle. No one remembers a structure like that in Yerevan. He fetched a circuit around the fortress, made a steep descent on the square in front of the castle. "But it is the same castle of Vachagan the Devout", thought Ben. Everything here reminds of early middle ages. Several people came to meet him halfway, as if they had impatiently waited for his arrival, to escort him ceremoniously to the castle. That surprised Ben. At this unknown place they knew him. Perhaps they had read his books, appreciated them at their true value. As to Yerevan, they were not only unable to appreciate, but rather many felt bad because of his presence. But then in this unknown world he was one of the most respected people. But how could the memory of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the events that took place 1500 years later coexist at the same place? However, how can he know that it is the present but not the past or the future? The doors opened up themselves. Well, no wonder, some people may have this type of gadgetry. In the center of a huge hall there was a large oval table. This is Vachakan's table, - thought Ben. Perhaps, Vachagan is watching the current events from his palace. "Vachagan was also like him bifurcated, - thought Ben, otherwise why should he ask scholastic priests about something suggested by a body-free spirit? Sitting around the oval table were all strangers to him. He thought he would sit through unnoticed, as had been the case at many different assemblies. However, all got to their feet, turned up to him and bowed their heads with respect. "It is even pleasant, when they know you and show respect", - flashed in Ben's mind. Someone in a white suite moved towards an empty chair at the vertex of the oval. It is interesting if they have read his story "The White Chasm", where God had to go down to Earth with the angels. Many of the angels are fascinated with earth life and become human. Father God is judged by the people, or rather the law suit is converted into a show, and is shown on the TV. Father God then had to go up to heaven alone, and so Ben imagined him to go marching amidst

the clouds. He is looking for a split between the clouds, to see the earth and the people.

Perhaps no one can recognize him here, they see and worship his inner devil. Ben thought that he alone was his carrier and therefore could serve as a model.

If they have brought him to the edge of the great oval, then by some reason unknown to him he must have an important status here. They could have possibly taken him for someone else. Anyway, wait and see, there is no way of guessing it.

There was an awesome voice in the hall, and Ben could catch the meaning of what was said with difficulty.

- Let us start with a prayer, - made out Ben from the noisy voice.

A beautiful and subtle trill of canary spread in the hall that was quite out of tune with the awesome voice. The subtle varieties of trills replaced one another. Ben remembered the canary songs of his friend Stepan. He had been preparing his canary for a competition and delivered training sessions to the birds. He had a look at the faces of men sitting around the oval. There was no one resembling Stepan. Everyone with bated breath admired the nightingale repertoire of their friend. He counted up to thirty-three tunes. Why did he stop just at the age of Christ? Then the hall was filled with the roaring of a lion, which choked the trills. That was the lion in the zoo seeing his mate in a locked cage nearby and roaring helplessly. Then followed the howling of wolves. Other long wails imparted some message to the wolves. He was convinced that those sitting around the table understood the language of animals, since every sound or roar made them emotional, they seemed to relive them with the animals. What if all of them are in reality those animals, represented in this assembly by human faces? No doubt, representatives of the Greens would be envious of the resourcefulness of this assembly.

- All members of the Synod, welcome to the 5637<sup>th</sup> Assembly, - said a voice, whose host remained a mystery for Ben. He concentrated his attention, no one's lips moved. Thus, only the Prime Minister of the country could speak. So, he is

also member of this Synod? How will he learn to speak like the Prime Minister? He remembered once Ben suggested to take lessons of rhetoric from him. He accepted with a grin. Of course, if he was a member of the Satanic Synod, he should have received that suggestion ironically. But he could also have been taken for someone else. Besides talking without moving the lips one has to keep his hands and head in a stationary position. When he hosted TV shows he was blamed for talking with his hands.

After a short silence the voice continued,

- The main item on the agenda getting ready to the climate change on the earth. The speaker is Doctor...

- Doctor Lavey is unwell, - said Ben.

Everyone turned to him in surprise.

- A member of the Synodium can never get ill, he is just unable to do so, said the voice.

- It is only his voice, it has gone husky, corrected himself Ben, and then went on: besides, instead of SINODIUM you should have said SYNOD.

There was a terrible mess in the giant hall. People sitting around the oval table were shaking and rubbing their eyes. Laughter did not stop for a second. When it calmed down, the voice said:

- And have you ever seen him, Mr. Synod with a thin voice?

- No, I have seen him once all in all, highly respected Synodium members.

The last word was pronounced with an emphasis.

- Well, well, don't get sulky, just the followers... – we see you but you don't see us. The speaker is the Great Master Peter Gilmore.

Ben did not quite understand what was meant by the expression "we see". That table, those sitting around it were wrong images. In actual reality they were devils with horns and tails, and with hooves like those of goats. He examined his vis-a-vis. A man with rather handsome features. He could easily become a Hollywood star. What he is doing here is monkey business, better go, make money and become famous. And his



neighbor, "Good Lord, exclaimed Ben, the splitting image of King Vachakan". Again he was in the center of attention. When did he start to talk in a loud voice? He did not remember, and felt ashamed. But he felt that he had to talk, not to make a fool of himself. He decided to show no surprise, even if King Vachakan came up to talk to him as a close friend from the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

- But cannot we establish a capability to discover the mechanism of a leaf, - said Ben, and repented at the same moment, for he did not yet know, what was the laughing matter with them, and what was serious.

- Is the mechanism of a leaf known to you? - asked the Chairman.

- No, I know very little, - answered Ben modestly, although he ignored, how much he ignored, and what was his knowledge compared to them.

- What do you understand when saying the mechanism of a leaf? - asked Peter.

It seems, the question was directed at him, for all turned their faces to him. Why did he cut in like a broken spoon, he didn't understand. Before that case..., what case, damn it, was it really so that a case like that took place, and why he happened to be in this situation? Wasn't it a pity, the ordinary everyday life? Though he was in need, though persecuted by many, starting from the chairman, (oh, one has to see whether he is one of these, hardly possible he is not among the members), the mayor, prime minister, some ministers, they always humiliated him, ignoring his merits. They have to get the response, before the end is to be seen.

- It is about transforming the energy of the sun rays by the leaf, - said Ben with confidence, and pleased with his words, he thought that his polytechnic training did not come off in vain. Perhaps he had suffered in that institution for this very day.

- And what if it should also be used as an annihilating weapon?..

- We will establish control, inventions should be submitted in stages, but then, why should you always schedule bad things? –

asked Ben.

- There can be no control, - said the High Priest, - but then, it is not our business.

- Isn't it less hazardous than the nuclear chain reaction?

- On the eve of discovering the atom there had also been a conviction that it was harmless, but then see what happened. It was fortunately possible to balance the world, to establish the two poles, US and USSR. But the leaf work is very serious. It is to be studied thoroughly. First all preliminary calculations should be done, only then the inventions should follow. It should be done so that the inventions come at multiple points at once, lest one country become super-rich. It was done so with the splitting of atom. Otherwise you know what could have happened. Here there are contingencies for inventions that can become a destructive weapon. What do you think, Ben, can you hear me, didn't you fall asleep?

- No, I am not asleep, Mr. Gilmore, thank you.

- What are you thanking me for?

- I am pleased that for you my opinion matters.

- That is all very good, - said the High Priest, - but with us formalities don't matter.

- I get you, - said Ben, and then went on with inspiration, - people have not yet come near to imitating the photosynthesis. They boil water even in nuclear energy, using the energy of hot water. It is a very primitive level. As to the discovery of the nuclear chain reaction, it was ahead of time.

- No, the splitting of atom had to have been given to man, so that he could counter the enemies.

- But there are hazards. Assume that of the thousand states suggested by Ben five hundred possessed nuclear weapons. No system will save the humanity.

- How is that, has Ben suggested such a thing? - asked one of the members.

- Of course, - said Gilmore, - he will make a report on this subject at the next assembly.

Ben was surprised. They know everything about him here. Perhaps his love affairs are also examined. Of course, when

inside him came...

- The human social system has to be adapted to self-regulation.

- What if they cannot?

- Well, then let Earth become a desert, like Mars.

- I do not agree,

There was again an unrestrained rumble raised around the oval table.

- Ben does not agree..., - said the husky voice.

One could recognize the voice of Doctor Lavey. When did he come in so that he couldn't notice? Or maybe there are other husky men here? Man, it should have at least been known, who they were and what their status was.

- Well, Ben, don't worry, - said the Chair, - it is good that you create a pretext for relief from time to time. We highly appreciate that. Meanwhile, the doctor's choice with regard to you is convincing. I think that man should be given a gradual capacity to invent technologies to use the properties of the photon. Ben is right on this issue. We shall see about it after the first session.

- In the case of the permission to invent the chain reaction we also thought in this way, but then what happened? - objected Ben's neighbor.

It was just at that moment that he came into Ben's attention. He got very nervous while talking, managed to maintain his breath with difficulty.

- Mr. Mikle Aquino, you know that lest the invention got into the hands of a rogue country, it was given to the two states, which divided the world into the two poles.

- The times have not greatly improved now, said Ben, - nothing has changed.

- There is no difference, - said Gilmore, whom Ben still could not see, - Ben, you must wear an earring, we have no national boundaries. It seems that though Satan got into you, he failed to cut you off from national thinking. That rarely happens. We reprimand the Satan.

- I protest, - said Ben.

There was a new turmoil in the hall.

- Who has discovered this clown?

- Didn't he say, Lavey.

- Where does he find them?

- This is the first time ever that I see a victim defend his torturer, - said the Chair.

- You are wrong, - Ben defended the basics of Satanism, - Ben and what is inside him are an integral body. This is a new step in our theory. Man and Satan complement each other.

- Thank you, Mr. Lavey, we shall take into account this novelty from now on, until your book is printed on that subject, said the Chair.

At that moment two beautiful girls came up, one of them took hold of Ben's right ear lobe, put it into a gadget looking like a pistol and fired. The other girl, looking at Ben with sympathetic eyes, hooked a soft-looking ring into his freshly perforated ear lobe. Ben touched the earring made up of some soft material hanging from his ear. It flowed like water. It was beyond his comprehension, how water could be hanging from the ear.

- It seems that he has already become an Armenian nationalist, - said Ben.

- Who do you have in mind, Ben?

- The Satan inside me, - said Ben.

- O, it is very dangerous, - said the breathless neighbor.

The hall was filled with general noise.

- Gentlemen, - solemnly said the Chair, - I suggest that we have a light supper in the adjacent dining room, a stand-up meal.

No one budged. Ben noticed that everybody's attention was nailed to a huge display on the ceiling. He also looked. It showed his name in big letters.

- Ben, are you taking part in the Assembly for the first time?

- Yes, sir.

Again the hall thundered with noise.

- Well, well, you have always appeared in the same position for the first time. Ben is simply more honest than you, he says what he thinks. But you cunningly remain silent, concealing your

disability.

He guessed that the honor to step the first into the dining room, or maybe, the dishonor, something that Ben did not understand, was afforded to him. He got up without saying a word. A man in a dress coat came up to usher Ben to an open door. Ben found himself in a hall with a serpent-shaped table. In giant cups on the table there were snakes. Ben once in his life ate snake meat when he was in a company of friends in the Middle-Asian Betpakdala desert and they lost their way back, stayed hungry, and his serpentological friends caught a giant lebentina viper, flayed and roasted it. Little by little the members of the Assembly came by, filling the hall. Ben was looking at the snakes with impatience. At last, he took up a fork and tried to plunge it into the body of the snake. Of course, one had to first fix it with a fork, and then cut with a knife. But at the same moment he jumped back with horror. The snake that perhaps had been brought from India was a cobra, raised its head and made threatening moves towards Ben. This time no one laughed at Ben's setback. On the contrary, everybody looked with concern.

- Dear Ben, said the approaching Dr. Lavey, - no one here knows that a special prize is assigned to the member of the Assembly who alone will choose a live snake as a meal.

- And what is the prize, - asked Ben who had recovered.

- No, we are not going to give out a prize like the one received by men. You will feel that prize in actual life. It is going to be an extra security against unpleasant things, like, say, a snakebite.

- So, I am insured?

- In some sense.

- What if I am under no danger?

- Were you not under threat, you would hardly get the prize of life.

- The danger is programmed?

- Perhaps. But let us talk of the Assembly matters. Do you agree? I like your thoughts, or rather their manner of presentation.

- I agree, only I don't know how to address you.  
- Just Doctor.  
- Well, Doctor. So then, all inventions of people are first approved here?  
- Quite so.

- And how is the selection done? If you first choose the persons, then corruption is possible. - The Doctor gave no answer. Perhaps some adjustment had to be made, so Ben said, - with people it is so.

- Cool down, Ben, said the Doctor, - the universal biological field will direct a given amount of energy towards a specific embryo, but that happens before birth. The system of selection is in the depth of the program.

- Wouldn't it be good to apply a similar natural order to selecting the Parliament and the Presidents? Moral decline and corruption change many things.

- No, don't make haste. The self-adjustment system is left for the people. The general public has a capacity for self-adjustment.

- With animals, the selection is fair, - said Ben, - the strong and the clever will become the leaders and manage the affairs of the pride.

- In the initial period people were also like that.

- Well, who selected Einstein?

- What, - exclaimed the would-be actor, - you dislike the theory of relativity?

"I ignore, how much clout have the Jews among them, in all cases, one has to be careful, thought Ben, - when an Armenian has made an appearance anywhere, that means the Jews had entered the place before.

- A noteworthy theory, - said Ben carefully, - however, there is a little trick here that no one has noticed.

- You have felt it, - said the Doctor, - but what is important here is not the end but the progress. The human society going this way has conquered a new degree in world outlook.

- What about Einstein?

- He himself knew nothing of his mistake, but when he knew about it, he showed his tongue.

- I have seen that picture, - said Ben.

- You did right. But he kept mum about his mistake, since his theory was accepted by mankind.

- Or rather, the Jews applauded... said Ben's breathless neighbor, who was clearly not Jewish. - Let me introduce myself: Michael Aquino, the Founding Priest of the Church of Seth. The Doctor has spoken about you.

- Ben, - said Doctor amicably, - at the session please speak on using the energy of the leaves. It is a good subject, although it is not in line with the agenda.

No one of the members of the Assembly tasted the snake meat, although the waiters tried to persuade them that all the portions were cooked except the one chosen by Ben. They had to take them away from the table.

- Dear members of Assembly, in honor of Ben we shall eat Armenian today, no, rather, Artsakh dolma. This will be starting the process on our part of recognizing the Independence of Artsakh. The beginning of everything is dolma.

The Assembly applauded. The waiters who were now clad in blue dress coats, brought dolma in huge quantities in giant bowls. The Assembly members started eating dolma and praising Ben with such enthusiasm as if it resulted from Ben's culinary talent. The dishes were emptied in minutes.

- Dear Members of the Assembly, - called the Doctor, - let us extend our thanks to Ben for this wonderful dinner and proceed to the hall to go on with our session. I shall not attend the Assembly, but will be in time for the closing. I wish you a great Assembly.

Ben noticed that slim notebooks are placed in front of all members of the assembly. Probably he had no status like that yet, that he could have been given a computer like that. He made an uneasy motion, so as to see the image on the monitor of the man nearby. A fat neighbor with his bulky body closed the display from Ben's view. He rapidly bent to the right-hand side of the neighbor's display thinking that he would not be quick

enough to shut out his view. The neighbor smiled amicably, turning the display so that Ben could see. What he saw struck Ben. Two luxurious girls, naked, were licking between each other's legs. It was the first time ever that Ben saw a thing like that. Well, he had heard about the same sex relations, but... He had always carried a computer in his handbag, true, it was somewhat old and big, but he wouldn't fall behind. He opened the bag, took out his computer, put it on the table, pushed a button, but it was dead. Ben could not make it work, no matter what he did. He started to think of his assistant Odet, trying to blame this failure on her. However, everybody was waiting stressfully, when Ben should at last put his computer into operation. He felt that he was sweating profusely. He could not find a handkerchief in his pocket. Odet had no fault in that. Where the handkerchiefs were going before being lost was a mystery. Someone must have been stealing the handkerchiefs regularly. He did not know that in all computers they showed the same action, and that the Assembly members also used to watch other sexual images. Probably, the scenes on that subject help to grab the attention of the audience in no time. The fat neighbor manipulated with his short fingers under the table, found the button and pushed it. A similar monitor appeared in front of Ben. Ben put his computer back into his bag. A man of about forty appeared on the screen. He smiled and said:

- Ben, congratulations, only don't change the set-up, never go after those sexual maniacs, though it may be tempting, and I myself sometimes... But everything has its time. You must not swerve from your mission.

- Aye, aye, Mr....

- The name is immaterial...

- The name is immaterial, - reiterated Ben.

An ironic smile appeared on the faces of Assembly members.

- Could we open to people the mechanism of leaf operation?  
- called Ben, not to say something clever, but rather to get out of the awkward situation, and also perhaps to gain the attention of the audience.



- That is...
- They absorb and transform the energy of the Sun rays.
- And what if they use it as a weapon?
- We shall supervise and keep it within limits.
- People do not comply with the supervision, since put in their basis is the mechanism of self-control.

- The synthesis of directed energy is less hazardous than chain reaction, - again objected Ben, although he felt now that he was going beyond the limits.

- In nuclear energy they had assured it to be safe, that it had been only for boiling water, but see what happened. The problem of synthesis must be discussed from all points of view, to study the results of analyses by different people. Charles Hempel, you are interested in ecology. Take Ben into your group, let him go in there and establish control. Only never touch the mechanism of self-adjustment in man.

- People are still far away from using the photon energy, spoke Charles, or rather Ben assumed that he was the speaker, but nobody moved their lips, and only one, judging by his thin prolonged face, a man about fifty, moved his head from time to time, so that Ben thought that it was him, then he went on after a short break, - even with the atom people boil water using the energy from inhibited reaction and steam pressure. As to our opinion, it is that the chain reaction was discovered too early.

- No, it had to be given to people, so that they could conquer the mutual hatred among them.

At that moment Ben felt as if he were a representative of the whole humanity, fully responsible for the destiny of all people. Charles said:

- But the hazard stays.

- The mechanism of self-adjustment works quite well in people, - objected Ben, - if it is not perfect, let us allow for improvements to be made. If they feel that there is an overseeing or regulating force, the civilization may be ruined.

- But if they prove unable to do so? - asked Charles.

There was a moment's silence An invisible voice said:

- So, this planet will become a desert? I agree to the program "mow down" by the ZEDs. It is a very comprehensive program. The Humanity will be reduced by 90 percent, and the Elite will control the situation, civilization will become more governable, and there'll be no more damage to the environment. AIDS and bird flu were among the unsuccessful attempts by the "Cleansers", however the newly created rain viruses will do the job.

- The expected flashes of the sun will also help to implement the cleansing program. The sun's blowouts will annihilate the earth's energy system.

- I disagree, what has been created by God has the right to live, - said Ben.

At that moment Ben understood, why he was all the time meddling to violate the established order. He wanted to discover the real situation, at least to know, where he is, and who he is, what his business was there, in fact, what was going on.

There was a rumble again.

- Ben does not agree, - said a familiar husky voice. Of course, it was the doctor. But how did he get in, so that Ben did not see? - Well Ben, don't worry, it is good that you create a pretext to make it easy for one moment. I think that the technology for using the photon energy has to be allowed to be gradually discovered by the people. We shall make a decision on the next step after the first session.

- Of course, we thought the same way in the case of discovering atom. It was however that the people exceeded our expectations.

- It was bad times: world war, hostility, crisis...- said Ben, trying to exonerate people.

- The times have improved now, said Gilmore, the Chair, - but nothing has changed. Do you remember the announcement in 1931 by Nicola Tesla's "reformers of the tough situation" that the cosmic energy would be converted into electricity? People intended to obtain energy free of charge by doing nothing.

- So, they would become idlers to stop the development.

- Maybe we shall start research from the roots, suggested

Ben, again trying to remove the crowd's attention from his person.

- What root do you mean, Mr. Ben?

- People's genesis, - said Ben, since he had lately advanced some hypotheses on the subject in his science fiction book.

- We agree in principle, however we are quite familiar with your theory on Genesis.

It is interesting that people do not read the works by Ben, but these do read and classify them as important theories. However, he had not yet succeeded in publishing his book on the Genesis of man. Strange things.

- And do you adopt it?

- Not a Bene only, not fundamentally. In reality it is not so.

- As space news program, you mean.

- So, you know about it, Ben. One thing like that, - said the High Priest, - everything is connected to the processes inside the superdense body. Along with a powerful explosion the program is spread in the Universe.

- Does each planet have its program?

- It seems to be this way. Existence of the animal world, all kinds of living beings has been previously foreseen.

- Wasn't anything left to the people? What about self-control, orientation...

- People were given the possibility to self-develop into a public creature, a self-orientation.

- Even the coming of Christ into the world, the Crucifixion, the rebirth of faith.

- It was a necessity within the mechanism of predetermined society.

- And you are supervising it all.

- It is an important alliance for us, for which we are accountable.

- Accountable to who?

- So we should know... We only know what is predetermined for us.

- You do blindly...

- We do blindly nothing. We simply know our business.

- Why is the full potential of human brain not used?
- That will open with the superdevelopment of society. If now the brain should work at the whole of its designed capacity, societies will collapse. To go outside the alliance is prohibited.
- A strict oversight, fetters, won't they impede the development?
- Everything is accounted for. The communities can enjoy opportunities of self-development, self-government and skill enhancement. See, in what ways they are different and what their levels of development are.
- The Armenians can never succeed in getting to the forefront.
- Seven thousand years ago the Armenians were the leaders.
- That means they are getting old.
- There is always an opportunity to improve, to revive. It is left to them. An outside interference will never make good.
- But if not?
- It is their business. If not, the neighbors will tear them.
- They crushed them several times: in 705 the country's Dukes were gathered, as if to establish the salaries, filled the churches of Nakhijevan and burned them alive. The intellectual power of the Armenians was annihilated, after that the Armeniency could not recover for a long time.
- We know what happened in 1915.
- Couldn't you stop it?
- It is the Armenian society that should resolve their own problems.
- In the years of WWII the Jews were burnt in gas cameras...does it also make part of the alliance?
- What is given to the Jews is theirs, we cannot take it away from them. If tomorrow they again get into trouble, we shall not intervene. They have to decide what they are going to do. We are in favor of the preservation of the species. But you have to remain within measures. The passion to rule the world will have to be restrained, not to break the alliance.
- But that has been programmed. E.g., the Armenians had a task to connect together the four corners of the earth, using

trade, to bring nearer the civilizations and cultures, - said Ben.

- That is ancient history. We have gathered here to resolve more urgent and global problems.

The Europeans demand of the Americans to watch the discharges of gasses, which spread worldwide.

- Spreading worldwide is in the mechanism of the Earth, it has a cycle of thirteen thousand years. It wouldn't be bad to reduce the discharges, although that is not going to stop the impending disaster.

- But the humanity can be saved from a big catastrophe.

- If they get together, they can save the civilization from collapse, lest everything should start from the beginning again.

- Do you think it is worth to save, or maybe let it go bust, so that the new world be perfect.

- Well, Ben, keep mum now, let others talk.

- Most Honorable Devil, - said one of those present and hushed up.

Ben remembered that the speaker can be followed on the monitor, otherwise there is no movement of lips. The screen showed a long face that he hadn't seen around the oval table. It said:

- Ben is a nationalist, he has not yet got rid of the complex of national preference. Maybe it is yet early to adopt him to The Develitium.

- Seven, you speak.

- I do not agree with Seventeen.

Ben did not know, whether it was Seventeen who was speaking, or not, however the face appearing on the screen seemed familiar, but there was no way he could locate it. The man on screen smiled and winked.

- I know Ben a long time. - The subject of morality was quite new in his speeches. That was instructive for all of us. Morality of the world is the basis of the Universe.

- You don't build up a system on morality only, - objected Ben to the surprise of the Assembly members, - there can be no development without struggle.

- I agree, - said Doctor, - Eden is absolute, perhaps

development is also absolute, only an example of building upon the moral. There man could not live or survive. The moral and the immoral must harmonize.

- By this reason the family of man and Satan made their exit from Eden.

- Well, dear members of the Assembly, - said the Chairman's voice solemnly, - today's session is terminated, the next session will take place in exactly a week's time. The subject: "The Expected Changes in the World Climate", the fate of the animals". I declare in advance: The version of Noah is ruled out. Ben is requested to report in time. Local conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Seeking ways of their research and termination as well as on problems of protecting national minority rights.

Ben came out of the building with the Assembly members, walked towards the river. He was greatly surprised to find no water in the canyon. Perhaps he walked in a wrong direction. He looked around dumbfounded. There was neither Tartar, nor Jraber, or the fourth century Diutakan. He was just in the courtyard of Yerevan University. In a short time Vazgen came up.

- Half-an-hour ago the Assembly session must have been finished, said he looking at his watch.

- That means my unscheduled presentations lasted half-an-hour, said Ben in a guilty tone.

- And what was the conclusion? - asked Vazgen.

- It turns out that there is another system of governing the earth that is outside the scope of overseeing the human civilization.

- It is rather related to the system of adjustment. Information is gathered, and gradually presented for discussion.

- Virtually decisions are made.

Ben focused his gaze on Vazgen, as if saying: I know in which center are you.

- If you mean me, then no. I am only in the system.

- And the Assembly wherein I take part?

- First Degree. They discuss, actually do rough work,

decisions are left to the next level.

- Who are the members of the Assembly? I could not make it out.

- Perhaps elective persons like you.

- I.e., half-men – half-devils?

- The devilish is arbitrary..... Anyway, as of now, you are the only one in this status among the Assembly members.

- Do they all know me?

- Not all.

- Can it be a Masonic Lodge?

- No, the Masonic are not in our system. It is rather that the Masons believe that they are in our system, however, they only play the role to deflect attention from us. It is convenient.

- It is a Jewish organization, isn't it?

- No, it is transnational. It is possible that the Jews may become a majority, since today they hold the lion's share of the world's wealth.

- What if the lion knows, - joked Ben.

- He knows already, and soon will take it away from them.

- Do you think it is possible?

- September 11 was the result of that invisible war.

- Do they decide who and in what country has to be elected president or king?

- No. But we allow them to think so.

- Isn't it dangerous? What about the Central Intelligence, who as of September 11, 2001 removed all areas of influence from the masons? But aren't they more powerful and it is them who actually rule the world.

- Under our observation.

- I am apprehensive about Armenia.

- You must not go deep into it, said Vazgen, - you have a big mission. Try not to deviate from the program. The Armenian Nation must themselves develop self-consciousness and morality, and gather up.

- Our predecessors could not manage to hold on to the success once gained.

- Those who can gain strength and power. For members of

the public your theory could be useful so that the Armenians give a correct estimation of the situation.

- If my words would mean something...
- Authors are important. Never stop writing.
- Corruption is crushing the culture.
- It is a serious problem. However you will have to solve your problems yourselves. Write about it. Don't linger.

- Tell me about it.

- The paper editor called. Asked about your article.

- Got difficulties in the family.

I know. Now nothing serious is happening, but one has to be careful. The cleansers are capable of anything. And they found a week place in your biography. Can you talk to your wife?

- She threatens me with the Cleansers. It is a very powerful organization. I am interested in a Secret Government. How high is its probability?

- I cannot say that I know everything. On May 29, 1954 Bernard, the heir apparent to the Crown of Netherlands and Paul Riskens held a meeting at the "Bilderberg" hotel in Osterberg to establish a Supergovernment or "Bilderberg Club" (BC). They gather in different countries to discuss different issues.

- And what is a three-sided commission?

- It was established in 1973. It is a new inspection over the inventions, - said Vazgen, - here they decide, what invention they would award to the civilization, and what will remain secret. There are about 800 inventions that people know nothing about yet.

- What inventions are those?

- Transportation of chemical elements, cold nuclear synthesis, antigravitation, control of space and time, new secrets of genetic engineering, parapsychology.

- What is this one?

- Effects of thought at long distance.

- Who rules the earth now? Help me to make out what is going on.

- There are three forces: the Illuminati, the Rosencreuzer



and the Masons, that are closely interconnected. Together they comprise the group GK-3. The Masons are controlled by persons of royal origin. They act using different financial establishments. All wars are processed in advance in GK-3.

- The outcome is also being determined.

- Of course, why should they start if they don't see the outcome?

- Did they plan starting the collapse of the Soviets by the Karabakh Movement?

- Regan and Gorbachov did what was decided by GK. When they saw that Iraq wanted to dictate the oil prices, they decided to start war. It is not everything that is going smoothly. The forces of Iraq and MJ12 were in confrontation.

- What is MJ12?

- When in 1968 David Sudzuki predicted the appearance of new poles on our planet, and as a consequence, the death of the animal world, the elite decided to get saved. MJ12 developed a new program, implying a 90-percent reduction of the Earth population, building the underground asylums and cosmic stations on the Moon and on Mars.

- Where from is all this information?

- Sometimes it is coming from the insiders. They are immediately shown on the Internet sites.

- It would be impossible to establish stations on the Moon and on Mars within the next fifty years.

- According to them, those stations are already in existence.

- In science fiction yes, in reality no.

- I agree. It is just simply that I gather information from all parties and keep it in the Bank.

- What is my field of action?

- Your domain is Triple Energy. They place certain expectations on you. I would advise you not to reject assignments. It would be right that you go someplace, that could allow you not to meet Eva.

- OK. I can go to Tsahkadzor's House of Creative Writing.

- Take someone with you.

- I can take my son.
- In the meantime I will sum up the situation. My task is to ensure your security.
- I have one more question to clear, - said Ben.
- The problem of placement, - there was a faint smile on Vazgen's face, - it was a computer test, now everything will come to order.

Vazgen was gone. Ben sat down on a bench, closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he could hardly restrain his emotions. He was in the ancient Diutakan. What was going on around him, he could not understand. At school or in the polytechnic all his lessons were materialistic, of the spiritually based things there was nothing. Anyway, those teachers had no idea about the existence of other types of worlds. The clergy, too, kept saying indeterminate things from the Bible, and nothing more. Ben started walking towards the luxurious royal palace. On the uphill road coming across were villagers, free citizens, soldiers, traders, monks in long black burkas, who bowed their heads to Ben as old friends. To his mind he shouldn't have been seen by those. And it remains to clear out, what was it all – shooting a film about the 5<sup>th</sup> century or it was his fantasy, or was it a dream? In this film he is starring. It may have been that Benjamin's novels unwritten pages revived, so that the author could unmistakably imagine the relevant period of time. It is just the case, no doubt, since Benjamin could only write his stories and novels in the way they write reports. The poor boy remained a journalist, despite the fact that his reports have attained the level of fiction. Ben passed the guards armed with javelins unmolested. As to the courtiers, they nodded their heads amiably. Of course, it had to be inquired, whether it was he who had found himself in the reality of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, or it was a replica of those reality events, or there is someone who by some unknown reasons was serving him all that stuff. Yes, he had received an order to write a script for a serial of films about Artsakh. Now he can see Vachakan in his mind, of course, he must have also seen the queen in the image of his Ashkhen. It was good that the role of

Vachakan had not gone to him. However, it was yet to see, whether it had been real or not. Benjamin started little by little to write them. He had to join the film crew, to help. He just forgot it. He had quite a few ideas about the Vachakan's Kingdom of Artsakh. Benjamin had to be reminded. Ben awoke from his thoughts, smiled to Vachakan in his turn, but he never turned his gaze towards the queen, though feeling her reproaching look. It could be seen with half an eye that the woman at Vachagan's site was Ashkhen. The same ambiguous smile, exterior, her gestures. "Ashkhen? Queen? My God, what is going on with me? Please, help me to understand it, Ben spoke to himself, then he thought, that Ashkhen and Vachakan must be reading his thoughts. However, why is Ashkhen here? Or is she playing a double game with him? She is everywhere with everybody. Eventually, when he felt that he was quite ready for all contingencies, he turned up to the queen to greet her amiably, although he had never known, how they greeted the queens in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Armenia. He examined her with minute attention. There was something about her that was not Ashkhen's. It was a good sign. It was quite possible, could be that 1500 years ago in the womb of a woman the same embryos could meet so that clones should be born. That cannot be ruled out. But when he came up, the queen could no longer control her feelings. She said she was unwell and left.

- Poor woman stayed in the rain yesterday, fetching relics of the saints, - said Vachakan.

- Long live the King, - said Ben, - no problem, the crucial thing is the Queen's health.

Of course, Ben was also worried about one more question. The Queen, whose name in history is mentioned as Shushanik, what did she have in common with Anahit, the wife of King Vachakan, described in the tale "Anahit"? Of course, at that moment it was not convenient to ask the King about that, all the more so that he was all ears listening to the young man of the Jigb nation, who in broken Armenian mixed with glottal sounds "khr" was telling about the pagan sectarian tribes living on the other bank of the river Kur. It has come about that the young

man suddenly heard heart-rending voices in the forest screaming for help, he approached and saw a sacrifice scene called finger cutting performed by pagan sectarians. He saw that the thumbs and the big toes of the sacrificial child were tied to the tits, and the right-hand thumb was severed with an ax, they started to flay the child starting with a left-hand thumb, lest the skin be damaged, then cutting the left little finger. The same thing was repeated with the toes. Following the flaying, the victim is mortified, while the skin is folded and put into a basket. The people executing that ritual were inspired by the screams of the victims.

The sectarians noticed the young man tracing them behind the shrubs, they followed him, and captured him, for he could tell the Christians about their savage ritual.

- My uncle, King Vache, his forefathers: Esvaghen, Asa, Sato, Merhavan, Vachakan, and Urnaair, who had invited the Great Grigor to Artsakh to spread Christianity, had been aware of the finger cutting and drugging sects, - explained Vachakan, - but there was no way they could manage their discovery and elimination. The Persian governors used to capture demons, graft them and let them go. I have now decided to eradicate such sects in the name of Christianity. The child recognized the flayers. He knew, if they caught him they would flay him in the same way. He dived into the Kur river, swam to an islet, and climbed a tree to escape from the posse. The child crossed over to the Armenian side and told his story.

- The pagans thought I was drowned, said the young Jigb.

- I have already dispatched men all around, they will bring those ogres, said the King, then, addressing the courtier priest, - Tovmas, celebrate Mass to God, asking that evil idolatry be discovered and obliterated from the face of the Earth.

Vachakan and his train stepped out of his palace, heading towards the square where on special scaffolding the sectarians were to be executed. According to the story told by the hangmen, despite the toughest tortures, pouring a mixture of concentrated vinegar and nitrate through the nostrils, it was impossible to rip off confessions, therefore it was decided to

decapitate them. Vachakan decided that one could obtain a confession by reason only, approached a handsome young sectary, saying in a solemn voice: "I will not let them kill you, if you tell me the truth and give a true account of what happened." The lad looked the King in the face for a moment, as if checking, whether he was saying the truth, then he believed, hung down his head and started telling his story.

- The devil takes up a man's image and orders people to be divided into three groups, to capture three persons from each group, without wounding or killing, but to flay them alive. When after flaying there comes the worshipping hour, they bring an iron folding chair, with legs like those of man, and we have all seen that they put precious dress on it. The devil will come, put on the clothes, and sit down on the chair. Then he will take up man's skin from the basket, open it to check, lest the skin should be damaged at whatever place. Then they will remove bark from a tree, then killing a bull calf or ram, they will make an offering at his feet, roasting meat. He will eat and drink with his evil companions. They will take a saddled horse and ride it as long as it will take for the horse to get tired and stop. After that they will disappear. This ritual will be repeated every year at the same time.

The King said to the boy:

- As I have promised, you will live, however, with regard to other sectaries in your village you will do the same ritual so that they see the evil disappear for good from the face of this country. At the same time I command to open schools in the land of the Jigbs, also involving the children of priests, to teach them literacy and the Mesropian letters, to hire teachers, pay them wages. To establish churches, let the deacons and priests go and preach. Bishop Shupghaishe, it is your country, I delegate you to eradicate paganism and assert Christianity.

- Command, King, I shall do everything.

- Mirhorik, - ordered the King.

- Yes, Sir, my King, said the overseer courtier kneeling.

- Give his Grace as much gold as he will want for this business.

- Yes, my Lord.
- God bless you.

The courtier priest came up to Ben and said:

- Our King is a strong and manly toiler who works the field with care and warm love cleansing it from all litter, sowing goodness and spreading it hundred-fold fruitful. Seeing this behavior, our Lord Christ awarded him a treasure hidden in the desert: relics of the most holy Saints.

Ben with uncle Aramais from Tonashen, when going to the forest always from the Blkhna spring that was above the village drank water, blessing the spring builder, nature, his ancestors, who had drunk water from that lively spring, and continued his way towards the summits of Kachal and Emirkhan. Now, too, he habitually bent over the spring, although being not thirsty, hit his lips against cold water, and found himself in the realm of reminiscences. He seemed to hear the hunters' conversations. Dwarf Apo is telling his regular hunting story, Osep is silent, since for years on end he cannot forgive himself occasionally killing his brother at a hunting spot who had newly returned from war. Having not yet stepped into his house, brother addressed Osep: "I miss the forest, Osep, fetch the guns, let us go hunting, I will quench my lust, and then go home. Osep used to do "chase" in the gorge, driving the game to an upper valley, where the hidden brother holding his gun at the ready was waiting for the deer to appear. Hearing the stamping of feet, alerts him more. At the first shot the animal dropped down and stretched on the ground breathless. Taking the deer piggyback, the hunters started on the way home, when passing over a fallen thick tree, Osep's gun hit a twig with its trigger, and the next moment he saw the giant figure of his brother prostrate. The brother said go, bring a donkey from the village to take me. By the time Osep came back with a donkey, brother crawled down to the water, drank it and gave up the ghost.

The self-forgetful Ben searched the valley through and through, remembering Osep's story, when he came to the ruins. Ben, sitting on a mossy hill of stone ruins of Summer-time Church, thought of the old centuries. Uncle Aramais said that

that chapel was King Vachakan's favorite worshipping place. The Europeans wondered why the Armenians had built small-sized churches, while the Armenians wondered how the Europeans could communicate with God in those huge churches. It is only in a small chapel that man can feel secluded and contact God, speaking from the depth of his heart. Ben's gaze fell on a refined crosstone. "ԻԹ ՉԶ ԵՍ ՏՐ ՆԵՐՍԵՍ ԿԱՆԳՆԵՑԻ ԶԻԱԶՍ ՍԲ ԱՆԴՐԻԱՍԻՆ": Thus, Ter Nerses in the year  $760 + 551 = 1311$  in memory of Apostle Andreas set up the crosstone. Why was it just to Andreas, was unclear. Perhaps he thought that Andreas was the most forgotten compared to other Apostles, or he could take a fancy to something in his behavior. As to the devout Vachakan, he lived from the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century to the year 513, 800 years before Nerces. Vachagan to the number of days in the year built worshipping structures in Artsakh to the number of days in the year, the Summer-time Church could be one of them. Maybe at his time, as well as 800 years later, there was an open glade there that was later covered with a forest.

## CHAPTER 6

### A FLOCK OF SWALLOWS

Ben could see King Vachakan, walking towards the church with his wife Shushan, a monk moved ahead, holding Shushan's horse's bridle, letting the Queen go down, to enter the chapel following her husband. The queen listened to the King pray. The King asked God to help gather the Aghve Constitutional Assembly that was to decide if the country and East Armenia retain the other Armenia, and the future of the united country. Vachakan was asking God to facilitate gathering the patches of the Armenian world and to create favorable conditions for them. When they tried to argue, why it was just Shahapivan constitution that was to be adopted at the Aghve Assembly, rather than the one prompted by the Persians or the Byzantines, he gave a straight answer: "Not only us, but also all scattered

tribes of Hike had to adopt the same rules, so that after unification it would be easy to govern. Following the prayer, the young King came down to the Blkhana spring, where he had a previously arranged meeting with a special envoy. Vachakan was expecting important news on the discovery of relics of Bishop Grigoris, the grandson of Gregory the Illuminator. The Bishop served at a church in Albania. On the way to spreading Christianity among the Huns the fifteen-year old bishop was killed by the pagans in the field of Vatian, not far from Chol. Vachakan after distributing the relics of St. Eghishe and St. Grigoris among new churches anointed, new holy places replacing the pagan holy places. Suddenly Ben saw Vachakan with his train, bodyguards and the whole surrounding crowd take the relics in a solemn way to distribute among the newly built churches.

For a moment Ben felt that he was looking for Ashkhen in the retinue. However, Ashkhen had nothing to do among the people of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Then he understood that he had seen Ashkhen with Vachakan just in the magnificent attire. But prior to that he had left Ashkhen sleeping on the site of the demolished Jraber. Why he had left her there, he did not know himself. Perhaps on waking up she found no Ben at her side and decided to abandon him. That is, it was not her decision to leave him. He could not make out where they were taking him. He remembered himself talking at the Assembly against his will. As if he was prodded from within, the folds of his brain were opening, making him read aloud, argue, get into the center of attention. Otherwise Ben used to check the situation a hundred times before deciding whether he should talk.

At some moment Ben saw Ashkhen in a crowd. She came out of the King's train and walked towards Ben with a self-satisfied smile. However, that time she was not wearing Queen's apparel. Queen Shushanik escorted her for a while and went back. It was incomprehensible for Ben, how she could appear in the events of the 5<sup>th</sup> century that he had imagined. However, since the devil came into his body, there were so many strange



cases that his face showed no signs of surprise.

- Where are we going? - asked Ashkhen.
- There is a voice reminding me to go to Shooshee.
- Inside or outside?
- It is an inside voice.
- Let us go, - said Ashkhen, - it is all the same to me, as long as I am with you.

Ben's answer was a smile, although an explanation of getting the role of the Queen at Vachakan's side was still wanted. He was apprehensive that he might lose Ashkhen through jealousy.

Soon they were on the Shooshee upland. They rode upwards on the Karkar valley. Ben wanted to show the exclusive nature of the Karkar mountain land. First they went down to Hovar spring.

- The ninth miracle of the world , - said Ashkhen in admiration for the wonderful view.

-How should the world know the places of miracles it has left behind?

Ashkhen entered under the water flowing out of a green stalactite formed by the water flow in the course of millennia, taking some sort of shower, slipped above, and very shortly they appeared at the tower near the entrance to Avan's cave.

- On the walls of the ravine there are ten caves of this kind, in old times they made part of the fortress' defenses, - explained Ben, Troup commander Avan built fortifications here, in 1825 he defeated an Ottoman army of 40 000.

- I have read this story in your book, - said Ashkhen, - however, we are coming to Shooshee on another business.

- Well, although I was looking for a pretext to go deep into the cave,... they say, some caves are interconnected at a deeper level. We shall have to postpone it until the next visit, but now we must go into the fortress city, - said Ben, - I wanted to go up the steps, however, we seem to be short of time. We must go to Aslan's summer house. The ghosts must be expecting us.

- Ghosts?
- Do you know about that?

- I know everything that is related to you, said Ashkhen.

The door opened with a scroop and Ashkhen walked, rather than slid, into a two-storey-house courtyard. It seemed to Ben that he was walking on air, his feet touching no ground. Ben looked carefully. There was weeping on the stairs. Sitting on the wooden steps was a guy, sitting and weeping. He was wearing a uniform of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century classical school student. Ashkhen came near.

- What happened, boy, why are you crying? She put her hand on his shoulder.

- Daddy, daddy...

- Where is your daddy, tell me, I will call him.

- I don't know, - answered the boy in-between sobs, - he sent me some place, but when I came back, there was no one, and the house smells badly.

Ben took Ashkhen aside.

- Ashkhen, the boy is one of the family of ghosts. The whole family were murdered on March 23, 1920, and their property was looted. On that day the Turks burnt down the Armenian area, wiping out the Armenian population.

- However, the angels forgot to take the family members to the underworld, so they stayed at their home for ninety years, - said Ashkhen.

- I think, hangmen are also molested by the ghosts. Aslan said that a holy father came and burnt some plants to drive them away from this house. But the boy was out, and he stayed.

- Now what can we do to help him, - asked Ashkhen, - perhaps we go to the shamans or to idols for help.

- Shaman falls into a trance through his dancing, climbs the World Tree to heaven. from there goes to the underworld, getting in touch with the ghosts. It is possible that he will take the boy there with him.

- I know another way, too. A shaman or a magus will call up a ghost, saying his will.

- Only I must warn, - said Ben, - Christianity associates sorcery with Satan and rejects it.

- Where can we get a real shaman or a magus?

- One can find them among the Northern nations of Russia, there are traditional families of shamans. I think I can go see them and ask a shaman for help.

- What is your name, my boy? - asked Ashkhen.

- What name, the ghost or earthly?

- Both.

- The earthly one was Arshavir, the ghost name is Khunk.

- Your father's earthly name?

- Artashes Melik-Beglarian.

At that moment there was a rattle at the entrance. The doors opened, and in came Aslan's clattering jeep. He got out of the vehicle, looking restlessly here and there. He did not see the boy, but noticed Ben and Ashkhen.

- Ben, when did you come, you know, my coming here has been prompted by my heart. The idea was urging me: go, go. There is something going on lately, I don't quite see, what it is.

- To tell you the truth, I was passing by, the sound of child weeping came to my ears, so I just came in, - said Ben to justify himself.

- What child?

- Do you remember the story with ghosts?

- Yes, but since that day, they have been gone.

- They have been gone, however, one of the children stayed behind the family.

- Wow, I thought I have got rid of them. I will go for the priest.

- No, Aslan, no need.

- Why, yesterday he asked about you. But where is the boy?

- Sitting on the steps listening to what we say.

- Can you see him?

- Yes.

- He is a ghost.

- I see.

Aslan looked at Ben, then at Ashkhen with suspicion.

- You haven't introduced me to the lady. Do you work together?

- No. She is Ashkhen.

- Now I know where my father is, - said the boy.

- I can hear some hissing, - said Aslan.

- It is the boy, - said Ben, - he says he now knows the place his father is in.

- My father is calling me, - said the boy, - I will go to where the sounds come from and will get him. If the priest comes, it will be bad.

- Well, my boy, - said Ashkhen, - go, but if you get into trouble, call me.

- OK, I will. I know already how to get you.

So many days have passed, since Ben hasn't entered his Foundation office. He hoped that Odet would continue the business that had been started by him. "Probably, I haven't died for them, thought Ben, - for there has been no funeral at all. Eva knows very well, what has happened to me. "The Cleaners" have told her everything. Now they are setting traps against me. Eva, too, wants to seize the occasion and pull Ben again into her net. If she doesn't succeed, she will at least avenge him. My presence in the office will confuse Odet. But in her absence he was very resolute and bold. After his inner change he has not stepped into the office. And now he did not know whether to take the elevator, or just to enter through the window. In case of the elevator, he must go material, so that the elevator's floor should feel his weight and go up, while in case of entering through the window he will remain immaterial, and will see on the third hand, what is going on. It is interesting, what happened when a photographic exhibition was opened in Shooshee. The old photos that he had gathered, are still there, on a web site. And what to do with the stuff highlighting all local conflicts in pictures and footage of chronicles and documentaries that has already started? On the first day more than three thousand photos were gathered about different massacres from different sites of the web. Before leaving, there was a call from Narine, correspondent of the "Armenpress" Information Agency, to fix a day for an interview. Ben was to give a talk on programs implemented by the Foundation.

He came in through the window, so that no one was aware of Ben's presence. Vasgen was absorbed doing something with

his website photos. He was choosing documentary photos from all places of conflicts in the Caucasus for the electronic museum. Sometimes he told Benjamin about gatherings of the Yerevan Satanists, their rituals and principles. Once even the journalist Marina talked to him and published it in a paper. In Vazgen's opinion the paper contained fundamental errors. In it, Vasgen is presented as a bigot Satanist, that is, to Benjamin's mind he was extraordinarily interesting personality, attending different gatherings, a permanent seeker. As to Marina, she needed to write an interesting and noticeable article, wherein she succeeded.

To Ben's surprise, who Ben saw sitting in front of his notebook was just himself, Benjamin. In this case who is me, - thought Ben, - I am sure, one of us is false. So, after my transformation there came about my doubles, lest the business of the Foundation should have been disrupted, and my absence shouldn't have been suspected". It is curious that this forgery has something to do with Odet. Everything goes smoothly, no one interferes. Odet is absorbed into doing her own business, compiling texts for the electronic photographic picture gallery. Ben decided to call his double "B2", though he was aware that an American heavy bomber had been given the same name.

Benjamin was talking to a dark-faced girl. From the subject of the conversation he guessed that she was a reporter from the "Armenpress" agency. Benjamin narrated with inspiration about the establishment of the program on the electronic museum "The Regional Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". He talked on details that he had never before confided to anyone. For Ben that was a surprise.

- We shall convene a press-conference at "Armenpress" and make an official opening, said B2. Then he spoke about the program of the National Photo Gallery, to be opened in Shooshee, then showed Volume One of the literary "Collection on the Struggle for Artsakh", spoke about the 12 Volumes that had already been digitized and had an epic value, however there was no one to help print it. Ben expected that they would also talk about the referendum on Shooshee, but that subject

escaped Benjamin's attention. One year before they had undertaken a Panarmenian Referendum with a question: "Who is in favor for Shooshee to become the all-Armenian educational and cultural capital" following an all-Armenian referendum? Each one in favor will make a money order of 500 drams to the account of the Foundation. The highest activity was shown by the workers of secondary education and power engineering. However, in Nagorno Karabakh it had no success at all. When, at the time of meeting with the President of the Republic Ben congratulated him on his 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary informing that the Referendum is under way and suggesting to also include Artsakh, the President rejected point-blank, saying that the Government could not take part in money raising. That meeting was on the air, so, the undertaking had no success in RNK. Ben wanted to object: "But this is not money raising, but rather a referendum, and we try to invite people's attention to the problems of Karabakh using a symbolic amount of money, the schoolboy who allocated one hundred drams for Shooshee restoration, is already an adept to the idea of saving a part of the country. Ben felt that it would be no use, that the President was deliberately putting up obstacles in his way, so that every step or every initiative should be under peril. Ben wanted to push, to force Benjamin to speak about the Referendum. True, Benjamin felt some disquiet at that moment, even wanted to talk about it, however decided to hold it up until the next meeting, all the more so that the Referendum had to be refreshed, to include more strata of the public.

The telephone rang. Odet took up the phone and addressed Benjamin:

- It is for you.

Benjamin took up the receiver. Ben tilted his head to hear the telephone conversation.

- What happened, dear brother, Donator is my name, brother, it is the seer of the Avenue's top part, get it? The Donuts' vacancy is open, there is a special note for you from the Kosh camp. The Boss came to see, there was no one... They will put the blame on me. When are you coming?

- I don't see what the point is, must be some mistake.
- No mistake, it is Benefactor speaking, the guy you met near the food store. See what you do, I bought the place. If you don't come, it is going to be bad, brother, you cannot give it up.
- You confuse.
- What, are you not the writer, Benjamin Shengalian? I taken your number from the writers list. It was you who talked to me that day.

Benjamin started to understand that it was about the invisible Ben, so he tried to guess it and enter the game.

- Oh, yes, dear Benefactor, I couldn't get it right at the start, sorry.
- Well, you know, I am a little man, brother, if they come and this and that, it is not my fault.
- No, be easy, I won't blame you.
- If you like, my boss will talk to yours, perhaps they can put up, one could get something for a hush-up.
- No, no big deal there.
- How is that, brother, if the Chairman of Writers' Union gives you an order, won't you come and stand up?
- Stand up where?
- But didn't I say, at the Donuts?
- He will never issue an order like that because he doesn't have any rights to do so.
- Well, if we put it at two thousand, a man will come to see you.
- Listen, give it an end, don't call me anymore.
- O.K., then you wait and see what is coming.
- Let us see it, - said Benjamin and put down the receiver. - You, stupid blabber.
- What does he want?
- Well, I don't quite see, he says come and stand up at the Donuts, the place is purchased, and as if there is a letter in my name. Who the hell the bastard is that he is playing this stupid game with me, I don't know.

Benjamin was typing some text on his computer. Ben felt Benjamin's nervous moments, since he could not get quiet. Ben

read the beginning of the letter. "To the Prosecutor of Nagorno Karabakh". However, it was he who had to write that letter. Since Sev Artseni, the former Director of the Foundation, had not submitted whatever account for his working years, either to him or to the tax department, the tax department chief declared that it was only after writing a complaint to the legal authority against Sev, that Benjamin could present an account from zero, he planned to write a letter, which only he had known about. So that the Benjamin sitting here was not too deceitful. He examined it with more concentration. There must be scars on the left hand fingers. Ben remembered that in his teens, when he wanted to show his friend a film advertisement, and the wind, which was not a rare occasion in the flat-land Margushavan, ripped it from the wall, then someone took it up from the floor, and tucked it in a crack in the metal shutters in the window of the wine store, showed the advertisement, but then again he put his fingers in the shutter, and at that moment some invisible thing caught his hand. He screamed and pulled back to get free. Someone incomprehensible was pulling and shaking Ben's hand. His hands were burning. Later they said that it was the party secretary of a machine station Ishkhan Beglarian who had pulled out the lamps connected to the electrical wiring, sprinkled water in his face, to bring him back to his senses. It became clear that the wine store keeper Arshak connected current to the metal lamps lest they remove the lamps to steal wine. Aram Babaian, director of the machine station, learning about it, fired electrician Seroj from Maragha and reprimanded the store keeper Arshak. After that case there are scars of the burns on Benjamin's fingers until now.

He had also similar scars on his fingers.

Ben saw that Benjamin on the screen switched file and started to type some text. It was that same story.

So, both of them think the same thing, or rather, that "second ego" reads his thoughts. Ben put his hand on Benjamin's shoulder. The latter winced. Turned his head and sadly looked at Ben. Perhaps he thought that the moment of his death had come. A light smile shone on his face and was gone. Ben looked



at Vasgen with attention. There was an inner strain. As if he had been waiting that something would collapse, some important and fragile thing, that has been building up. Eventually, Vasgen cut his gaze off the screen and looked Ben straight in the eye. Ben saw the same gaze, that devil's gaze, that despite the obstacle of the long kitchen knife entered him. Ben felt that in his brain someone is talking to him voicelessly. First it seemed that it was his second voice, then it became clear that he did not think so. "Quiet, Ben", no panic, nothing extraordinary is going on, brace yourself, do nothing. I promise to have a special meeting and discuss everything. The matter is that you have a great mission. You are the chosen, put up with it."

Vazgen fell silent, for he felt that Ben submitted.

At that moment a group of men came in, aged 35 – 40. They greeted Benjamin warmly, as old friends.

- 15 years have passed, but you haven't changed, - said Vahan.

Ben recognized two of them. They were members of the "Ashot the Iron" task force headed by Pavel Yeritsian. In the Karabakh war in early August, 1992 he went from the village of Chldran to Mghoz with that task force. Along the way, near Haterq, Pavel killed two piglets, just from the truck with automatic gun fire, the soldiers threw them into the truck and went on their way. Pavel explained that it was better not to eat big boars, since they eat corpses in the forest. In Mghoz the soldiers roasted the piglets' meat in an oven. The meat was not roasted too well because the fire was too hot, however the soldiers ate it submissively.

In the evening Benjamin and Pavel had long conversations. Pavel said that if he were to become a POW, he would commit suicide without hesitation. The boys' voices were heard arguing and countering one another well into the night.

- What voices are those? - asked Ben with concern.

- It is OK, - answered the commander, - they are arguing about Lena, our sniper.

In those days Benjamin had lost a notebook on the front line, which made him very concerned. He tried twice to recover it, but

was sighted by the Azerbaijanis and was fired upon, so, he abandoned the search. Towards the evening the news got around at the front line that Benjamin had lost a scratchpad with two years' war notes. Then in the morning, after another unsuccessful search and disappointment, at the crossroads of Shoraghpiur, a soldier seeing him from afar, waved his hand calling out:

- Ben, come here, we found it!

- How did you do it, asked Benjamin in surprise.

- When last night I told the boys of my company about your lost notebook, we called a meeting instructing that it was our history, it was our duty to recover it to Benjamin. In the morning we gave it a combing and got it.

- Saying thank you is not enough here, said Benjamin, but for me this attitude of the Armenian soldiers is very meaningful. The army soldiers having such a high appreciation of their nation's literature and cultural values can never be defeated.

In those days the soldiers were talking about assaulting and encircling the Aggressor, and they lost their commander. They remembered that Pavel took up a machine-gun confronting endless rows of enemy soldiers. His bursts of fire stopped the advancing enemy troops. The black-uniformed soldiers were seen running madly for their lives. Meanwhile they were coming under friendly fire as well. The barrage squad were hammering at the escaping troops with no less energy than the Armenian soldiers firing at the Aggressor. A little later the Aggressor's machine-gunner spotted Pavel and fired in his direction. The bullet broke Pavel's thighbone. The boys of the detachment left Pavel and somehow tore out of the clinch. Later many blamed Pavel. Two days earlier, being appointed commander of the left-side of the Mardakert section, Pavel Yeritsian sent the smartest soldiers of his detachment to reinforce the television tower hill and other parts of his section, however at the same time significantly weakening the positions of the hill quarry committed to his detachment. And so, several boys of the detachment, who had to evacuate the commander preferred not to risk their lives and to save their own hides.

Fifteen years later, the detachment boys were interested in the film shot by Ben, as well as in rehabilitating the good name of the detachment.

- Had Pavel been alive, the detachment's name would have become famous.

- I wonder if there had not been anyone who could have maintained the detachment, asked Benjamin, - what is it, hadn't he trusted anyone? He had been too well aware that no one could have been ensured at the time of war.

- Yes, perhaps he was not prepared for this contingency.

Ben, in whom there was the devil, decided for a moment to enter into Benjamin. Probably in this case the devil will not have place in him anymore. Thus, he displaced the mortal, and occupied his place. But later, will he be able to get out? Unnoticed, Ben slipped out through the window.

It was getting dark. The swallows continued their twitter and intricate gliding to fill the air hunting in twilight for the midgets. It is interesting, how they can see those tiny creatures in the darkened air. And those insects, what have they lost in the air? Probably, their feed, too, by this time goes up in the air, and they have to do hunting at the same time trying to evade falling prey to the swallows. But what was the midgets feed, for Ben remained a mystery. What temptation was created by the nature for them to go up in the air and to fill the stomachs of the insatiable scissortails, Ben ignored. It was however quite clear that the nature had created an interesting circle, and if a single link broke in this circle, let us say if a man-made chemical emitted into the air destroyed the midget feed, the entire chain would collapse. So, among the deer there must be the sick and disabled, so that the wolf could get them. And if instead of the wolves we took people, the sick and disabled deer would have posterity, and the species of deer would become sick... A swallow went through Ben. and then some more swallows. What interesting things could the swallows find inside Ben? Very probably, Ben was a convenient refuge for the invisible tiny creatures who were the fodder of mosquitos which had been noticed by the midgets while the gathering of midgets has not

gone unnoticed by the swallows, therefore the principal target was Ben. While the gathering of midgets inside him was not felt, the flight of each swallow initially tickled the body, but when hundreds of swallows started swiftly piercing his body, Ben felt sharp pain. He waved his hands in anger. From unexpected blows, the swallows scattered convulsively in different directions.

Before the press conference Ben was uneasy. Is Benjamin able to present the matter so that it should be accessible and comprehensible to all journalists? Ben knew that most journalists didn't give a damn about that matter. Therefore the presentation should be done in the right form and style. Benjamin had managed to distribute the invitation cards among the papers, radio and television companies. As to the relevant European offices and embassies, their representatives got special luxury booklets. In the morning Vazgen had to install a projector in the "Armenpress" hall to show the Web Site on the screen. Benjamin did not give himself the trouble of fetching the screen along with the projector. But when the Agency manager refused point-blank to use the wall instead of the screen Vazgen raised an alarm.

- "Armenpress" manager prohibited to show photos from the Internet on a blank wall.

Ben hoped that Vazgen would settle the arising problems. However, he only made sure that Vazgen did not want to expose himself.

Benjamin hurried to "Armenpress" along with Odet. Ben was, in his turn, very concerned. Some premonition told him that he should follow him into the street. At the side of the writers' house two passersby came up looking at Ben with a strange curiosity. The glances were very inquisitive. As if they were checking, whether it was Ben. So, they know about the changes in Ben.

- Why should they focus on you so, asked Odet, - do you know them?

- The first time ever, answered Benjamin, - and they seemed to be non-Armenians. But very self-assured.

- Do you have any suspicions?

- It is difficult to say something...

One thing that was left to Ben was to draw their attention away from Benjamin. When they turned towards the "Armenpress" building, Ben became visible and walked towards the strangers who had showed interest in him. One of them thrust his hand into his armpit and rapidly drawing a pistol with a silencer, aimed it at Ben and pulled the trigger. Ben ignored whether he was material or not and if the pistol bullet would injure him. He left everything to the will of fortune, even to the devil inside him. In the next moment Ben could hear the pings of the bullets. Perhaps the bullets passed through his body. The gunman was perplexed looking around for Ben. He had to fire a proof round to validate his contract. However, the victim vanished. The killer dumped his weapon and cut away. In another moment he was already hovering in the air. Benjamin took him up high in the air and let him go.

On the lane to "Armenpress" agency, close to a food store, a beggar blocked his way.

- Hi, brother, but I said you would come, now go to the bagel store and stick around there, oh, no, first go change your clothes, who will give you money like this?

- Odet, go to "Armenpress", I'll be there in no time, - and then to the beggar:- you mistake me for someone else, said Benjamin, - I am not what you say, and I have never met you.

How is that, never met, are you not the writer? Ben Nengalian?

- Bengalian, - corrected Benjamin.

- Well, let it be, the same trash, be quick, now put couple traps on you and stick in your place, if not, the watchdog's boys will see you not there, will kill you, there is a watchdog on you, get him two hundred thousand drams by noon this very day.

- Are you nuts? You must get it wrong somewhere, said Benjamin and left.

At the same moment Ben popped up in front of him, he had been patiently following them. The beggar called the watchdog on his cellular phone.

- The writer was here, he refused, tell me what to do.

- Hey, Nvir, mind your business. Stay as you are.

- No, how is it? We agreed, they sent writ from Kosh, tomorrow the boys will come, ask for money from donuts, what shall I say?

- Nvir, dear, let it be, I will sort it out.

Ben glided towards "Armenpress" agency, the site of the press conference. He knew for sure that here, too, his adversaries will put forward a reserve version of murder.

Ben entered the manager's office imperceptibly. Benjamin wanted to convince the agency manager to allow the image of a site to be shown on the bare wall. The manager said:

- It will be better if nothing happens than we become the object of ridicule. You don't know those journalists, they will skip the wonderful event and write only about showing the site on the naked wall.

Benjamin was compelled to do with the notebook monitor. Odet was handing out the explanatory material in three languages. Distributing the detailed written data among the journalists, he wanted to minimize their mistakes in that way. Once on the next day after a solemn opening of an exhibition Ben noticed that all papers in all articles concerning the exhibition made grave mistakes. His student, a frivolous girl, though quite attractive on the outside, made seven mistakes in a small report, confusing people's names and official positions. Ben read a special course for journalist students on the subject of "What not to write", showing those materials.

The conference was attended by all television companies and newspapers.

Benjamin made no mistake in his material. Of course, he moved his hands like him, thus making the presentation natural and convincing. However, the discourse was slow, although the answers were brief and discrete. In the end Benjamin offered the journalists to actively participate in the forum. Poor journalists, unaware of what was going on, showered Ben with dull glances. Many of them ignored what "web site" is, to say nothing of the local conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Benjamin also narrated about attempts on the part of some Arab hackers to

break their sites and about a threat note written by him to one of those breakers by electronic mail. Prior to attempting to break their sites, he crashed a number of Chinese and Russian sites. For Ben it was quite unexpected, however he was pleased that Vazgen had established good defense for the sites. Meanwhile, the so-called "Hacker" reaching the site through the false channels prepared by Vazgen, thought that he had already broken the site of the Armenians, and reported to his customer in Baku that he had already executed the order, so that the money should be transferred. The customer checked to see that nothing has been destroyed. The Internet killer again tried to enter the site via other channels, but failed, while Benjamin's note surprised him a lot. The victim had not only resisted successfully, but also had discovered him and his sites, threatening to kill them all by a retaliation strike in case of another assault. Those computer wars looked quite interesting to Ben, and he often wanted to interfere, however he felt that prior to that he had to materialize, perhaps step into Benjamin along with the devil, but what would happen in that case, he ignored. He felt that the devil was against that step.

Ben was standing behind Benjamin examining the journalists with great attention. At one moment Ben tried to catch sight of the glances by the operator and the long-faced journalist reminding of something. But he saw them for the first time. The number of TV companies were growing from day to day, and the fledgling specialized universities issued inexperienced and ungifted journalists to those studios and papers, resulting in a sharp drop of quality of the aired and printed materials.

Meanwhile, the operator was talking on cellular phone to some unfamiliar person. It was clear that the operator had received instructions, so he signaled a journalist sitting in a farther end of the hall to start acting immediately, he started the camera, so as to take pictures of the killing. The long-faced girl aimed her camera at Benjamin and held it. However at this very moment Benjamin unexpectedly vanished, or became invisible. On the next moment the killer girl saw Ben standing and smiling

at the journalists. The girl aimed the lens at him and pressed the button. There was a minor click, while Ben continued awarding smiles to the journalists.

The killer girl, unable to understand what was going on, rushed out of the hall in confusion. She talked on her mobile very vigorously. At that moment one caught hold of her clothes and pulled up.

The Russian radio correspondent was very interested in breaking the sites of Yavlinsky and Zhirinovsky, as well as some Chinese sites on the part of some Turkish hackers living in Russia, as well as in unsuccessful attempts at breaking the site [www.avaxis.org](http://www.avaxis.org) . The correspondent was interested in efforts to wipe out a photographic site by certain parties. She suggested to hold a discussion on that matter. Benjamin said that he had already sent a warning letter to the hacker, informing that he was already known, his location, his site named "sniper", and if need be, he would be destroyed along with his site, it was simply a warning to keep away from his sites. A few years later Benjamin learned that their sites were advertised by a well-known Turkish Arab-lettered site. There could be no doubt that it was a response by the same hacker to Benjamin's letter. Benjamin looked at his watch and jumped up from his place.

- What is it? - asked the Russian radio correspondent.

- In ten minutes the court session is starting, - said Benjamin leaving rapidly. Ben followed.

After changing the city transports three times, Benjamin entered the courtroom breathless. The plaintiff was the sister of Eve, Benjamin's wife, a stout woman in a black skirt making her look like a bull. Seeing Benjamin, she started to heap abuse on him. She had sued her mother and her brother-in-law demanding a payment of one thousand American dollars.

- But you could meet your mother to solve the matter peacefully, - said Benjamin, - You have not seen your mother for 12 years, first reestablish the relations.

- Shut up, I have no mother, - cut off Ira dryly.

- You have no mother, indeed, then maybe you go see her grave, or how do you get rid of your guilt?



- You better give up your writing, - said Ira as an answer, -  
Ervand, that schoolmaster, isn't he a pity, you defamed him in  
the eyes of the world.

- Sure thing, as soon as you decide, I will stop writing.

- Your Honor, you know what a great squealer he is.

- If you prove, please, but you have no right to insult a  
journalist, all the more so that he is recording your words...

- Your father's house has been sold by your mother, so you  
better address your demands to her, - said Benjamin, handing  
the judge the notification.

- How is that, you are a resident of another area, - said the  
judge to Benjamin, - by the law, a court suit has to take place at  
the court domiciliary of the defendant. I retire for deliberations.

Ira half-turned and riveted her eyes on Benjamin.

- Don't you look at me, you make me vomit, said Benjamin  
with disdain, - your mother is on the point of getting her call,  
don't you want to see her?

- Shut up, I told you I have no mother. Or else: why are you  
keeping that hag, throw her out, dump her on the street...

- I have never seen such a monster...- said Benjamin.

The judge was late. Ben decided to check on the reason of  
delay. He climbed the stairs to the second floor and unnoticed  
entered the judge's room. A huge man fixed a threatening gaze  
upon the face of the judge.

- Listen, it is not compulsory, that I say whose order it is.  
Make a decision to put Benjamin under arrest.

- But I have no legal ground for that.

- Create one. The apartment has been sold on false  
documents.

- The apartment is owned by the plaintiff's mother who is a  
lawful inheritor. The plaintiff demands a payment of a thousand  
dollars.

- You write that Benjamin has sold it in the name of the  
mother and make a decision to immediately arrest him. The rest  
is not your business.

- I cannot, - said the judge resolutely.

- Well, in that case you will answer, - said the stout man and

handed the cellular phone to the judge.

- What shall I say and to who?

- Listen, you stupid, Kojgo himself wants to talk to you.

The judge took up the phone and pushed the key.

- On the phone, - he said humiliated.

- This is Arkaian, there is a problem.

- Mister Arkaian...

- Listen, fool, only listen, never talk. What the guy says, just do it, and that's it.

The judge returned the phone.

- If you don't, you must know, it is the end, you know, I only fulfill orders.

- The case must be examined by the court, covering the area of the defendant's residence. I will dispatch the case there, you go and resolve the matter with them.

- My orders do not include that. Did you hear what the Chief said? Besides, it is not for love, the fee, promotion...

- I understand. Well, I will now make up a new arraignment, for the new decision to be taken.

- No, you have it wrong again, first write the decision, and then sit quiet and arrange the papers as needed. I will go and bring the special task force.

- OK, the decision will be ready in five minutes.

As soon as Kojgo's bodyguard left, Ben said:

- Citizen judge.

- Hi, who is that?

The judge looked around, it seemed that he heard the inner voice.

- You cannot see me, - said Ben, - I am the one you condemn to death. And you are the judge who acquitted the two cannibal women of the Sevan madhouse.

- What could I do, they pressed me against the wall, the Kojgo's people. Now, too...

- I know, for your service in Sevan you have been transferred to the capital. It is a full stop now. Close the file on Benjamin.

- What do you say, the Kojgo's people will tear my head off.

- The situation has changed.
- But who are you?
- I said I am Benjamin.
- Benjamin is now in the courtroom, he is guarded by the Kojgo's guys lest he escape.

Ben showed himself to the judge.

- I can see you now.

You have no right to evade justice. I will complain.

- Before you complain, it will be late, - said the judge, - besides, the decision has been already taken without my consent.

- I will not allow that.

- What are you, to do that? The host of the country and the ruler is the one who orders.

This dummy is the boss and the ruler, because the underdogs like you are at the courts, in the law enforcement bodies, in the inspections, in management boards.

- His is the utmost hire and fire power. I will give you an advice: never think about it.

A secretary entered. Ben could hardly make himself invisible.

- In the courtroom both plaintiff and the defendant complain why the judge is lingering.

- It is not their business. There have been some complications, let them wait. What is it? Is Benjamin in the courtroom?

- Yes, a little uneasy.

- Quite strange.

- What is strange, Mr. Gonjoyan?

- Nothing particular, you go to the courtroom, I will follow you in ten minutes. - After the secretary was gone, he addressed the invisible Ben, - he had heard about the unseen people, but hadn't believed in them.

- Trust me and do what I say, said Ben.

The bodyguard came in.

- Let's finish with it, Mr. Arkaian is waiting for you, - he said to the judge.

- There is a new problem that appeared.

- What problem, listen, you are already pulling my leg. - The bodyguard took up a pistol and stuck it forcibly into the judge's mouth; - I have an order, if you don't do it immediately, to kill you and to dump you on Benjamin.

At the same moment the pistol jumped out of the bodyguard's hand knocking him on the head twice with the handle. The bodyguard dropped to the floor unconscious. The judge jumped up from his place; however two strong elbows nailed him to the chair. Ben said:

- Mr. Gonjoyan, now it is my turn to order. Write rapidly a decision about changing the court, according to the current legislation. Ben is a resident of another area.

- Well, I will write, but the responsibility is yours.

- Let it be so, don't you worry, answered the voice.

The broad-shouldered guard came to, slowly rose up.

- Listen, what was it, who knocked me on the head?

- Ben, said the judge, - I have nothing to do with it.

- But he is guarded in the courtroom, or maybe he's been already taken away. It seems, you don't quite make it out, whose order it is. You will answer for what happened.

At the same moment his legs gave in, and he banged prostrate on the floor. The invisible foot stepped on the throat.

- Hey, I will...

- Shut up, - not a single sound, - said the invisible Ben, - Gonjoyan, go to the courtroom and announce the just decision.

The judge left, and Ben let go of the judge after seizing his phone and his weapon.

When the judge entered the courtroom, Ira assaulted.

- Why are you delaying the court procedure, I am sick, don't you see my hands tremble. Evidently, he has seen you before, as it should be.

- What does it mean, seen me, - asked the judge.

- You know it yourself.

- The Law says that the trial has to take place where the defendant resides. Otherwise, he will complain and you will be accused of violating the law.

- You could have refused at the start. It is the third time, and no result.

- I am referring the case to the court in the area of the defendant's residence.

- I will not go to another court.

- It is your right.

Ira walked to the door saying:

- A real monkey.

- Sorry, Mr. Judge, was it you who is being named a monkey? - asked Benjamin.

- I don't quite understand, - replied the judge with hesitation.

The Kojgo's guys cleared the court entrance.

In the court lobby Eve's sister was going on with her defamation campaign. As soon as she saw Benjamin, she raised her pitch.

- I will bury your head, see what I am going to do to you...

Benjamin's silence angered her even more; the cursing was followed by incoherent howls and squealing. Benjamin thought of making a recording, however no recorder could distinguish her words any more. When the voice stopped, Benjamin said:

- There is going to be a trial, then you will say what you want, why raise hell now?

## CHAPTER 7

### «NEGATIVE ZED»

Ben took his son to escort him, thinking that it would be a convenient excuse to communicate with him, to implant some views. The most significant for Ben was injecting the ideology "Everyone's gain is the gain of all" into the young man. The young men always reject those ideas saying they are utopic, since you cannot live on a pittance, and if, say, a law enforcement worker tries to adopt a posture denying corruption, the system will dispose of him at once, he will become jobless, and the corrupted system will never hire him. If for the reason of

poverty a country cannot provide its subjects with sufficient salary, that means that it will stay in the claws of corruption. Meanwhile, corruption is hurdle No.1 to the social development of a country. Through corruption, a large part of economy remains in the shade, while a small budget is unable to pay high salaries in order to secure a proportional development of the country. One of the outcomes is to have a country leader that will establish the ideology "Everyone's gain is the gain of all". If however the electorate is prepared to get twenty thousand drams per vote, how can you elect an anti-corruption President?

Amid those thoughts Ben reached Tsakhkadzor in the company of his son.

Snow blizzards and fog closed the view of the Tsakhkadzor scenery. Neither could one see the chairlift going towards the Teghenis mountains. However at the Creativity House of the Writers' Union the atmosphere was agitated. Ben and his son Hovhannes could gain entrance only by showing the Writers' membership card. Before being admitted, everyone was carefully examined by stout men in long black overcoats.

- On what occasion is it, Movses, - asked Ben the manager of the Rest home.

- Scheduled for quite a while, some International congress. Many important people came from the whole world, so security services are on high alert. Armenia has lately become an important venue of International gatherings. A month ago there was a meeting of the world crime bosses, a so-called "get-together". The one with a handle "Little Jap" decided that the country of the Great "Svoy" and Rudik Ohanov is worthy of that honor.

The Creativity House is the destination of very expensive luxury cars. Special groups go out in advance to see the partakers in.

- They say some "MJ-12" ..., - added Movses.

- Can I take part in the Assembly, - asked Ben, remembering

the spirit-delivered report on the International crisis.

- I don't know, you will have to ask them. But, I must say, they inquired who of the writers were currently staying, and especially your name was noted. I think you will be invited to take part in the Assembly.

He was accommodated in 205, with Hovhannes. It had been two years already that the son separated, there was a barrier between father and son, that was overcome and the cordial conversations resumed. The son used to cut off: "Dad, you have lived a wrong life. Now there is another approach to life. Your moral instructions to seek for an individual gain in the universal gain is stupidity". When Hovhannes was a young boy, everything was easy. But sometimes he was so witty that Ben thought he was a gifted child. Once, watching a cartoon on the TV he turned to father and said: "You know, the short is longer than the thick". Ben offered to many to find a solution to the riddle by his 5-year-old son, but with no result. One day he wrote down the puzzles by Hovhannes handing it to a paper for publication, then it was aired on the radio, and one day he received a fee of ten rubles. However, it became clear that it was an original manifestation of talent in the child that later waned.

Ben was thinking, how he was going to find the common facets of communication with his son, when an employee of the Creativity House delivered an envelope and a package.

- It must be an invitation card, they ask to attend the Assembly by all means.

- And the package?

- It must be their uniform.

Open. A white tuxedo, a shirt, trousers and a bow tie. The suit carried a golden Z badge on the breast.

- I will not wear their uniform, said Ben.

- Then they won't let you in.

- We shall see.

An invitation card in golden letters, with golden threads and ribbons, and sealed with wax, like royal letters of the old times. Ben was surprised at the short notice to prepare the invitation

card. Probably, the name was printed in later into a previously prepared card. One thing remained: to consult Vazgen. However, the cellular communication was unavailable. Telephone service was disconnected, both in and out. Ben decided to accept the invitation. It is interesting, what the MJ-12 top stratum is like.

- You go, dad, - said Hovhannes, - I shall wait for you in the lobby. If need be, call me on mobile.

- The mobile is shut down. But ask Movses in my name to send our bags to Yerevan.

- I think that...

- We have to be ready, - said the father, - our leave has ended.

- Only just arrived...

- Another time, son.

Ben produced the invitation card at the entrance to the Assembly hall. The door guards examined the card, measuring Ben with searching eyes.

- Without tuxedo or badge no entry.

- Not to me, I have been invited, - answered Ben.

- The invited shall also respect the host-established order.

- No problem, I am not attending, - said Ben starting to retreat.

- Wait a moment, I will ask the Master of Ceremonies, - said the doorkeeper entering the hall. He came back in a moment.

- I ask your pardon, you are granted an exception. But please note that this type of exception is done for the first time. That means you are a very important person. You are welcome.

The Assembly Hall could hold few people, so not all could take part. Perhaps, the partakers had been divided into specialized groups. Ben recognized some persons whom he had seen on TV broadcasts from EURONEWS or CNN. Gathered around a long table were mostly former leaders of different countries, party leaders, personalities dealing in military and intelligence matters. However, why he, Ben, has become a party to this type of assembly, remained only to guess, or else, to wait patiently for the course of events to develop.



He met for a moment eye-to-eye with the former President of the Country Georgik Ter-Abasian. Back in 88 there was a mutual attraction between Ben and Georgik. Later, the leaders of the movement started to mistrust Ben, particularly when he refused point-blank to side with them.

- Benjamin, I have been surprised to hear that another Armenian was going to partake in the Presidential Assembly, - said the former President of the Country, - however I could have never expected to see you here.

- But I have been looking for you among those present, since I had no doubt that you had to be here, - answered Ben.

- It has already been ten years since I have not participated in top-level assemblies, - said Georgik in an intimate tone, - while the Movement has shown interest in you, you have even been nominated in the future government. Then it was discovered that you had been equally close with all political sources of the country, you even had some ties with the Armenian Liberation Army.

- A real leader of the country must be able to unite all forces, rather than be member of one in order to persecute the others, - said Ben. - You declared yourself as a personal enemy of Dashnaktsutiun and started to persecute them.

- I remember, you had participated in the latest meeting of the Armenian Liberation Army and suggested that we admit five hundred members of the Armenian Liberation Army into the Yerkrpahs, when we decided to shoot them all.

- If they lost their way and entered the Army of Vasilyan, that does not mean that they are public enemies.

- They were criminal elements, therefore many were eliminated.

- And the closure of the Nuclear Power Plant was ordered by the ZEDs?

- Yes, the decision was taken at one such meeting. If we hadn't shut it down, there was a decision to blow it up. The NPP of Chernobyl, wasn't it a good lesson for us? I have saved the country.

So, "the negative ZEDs helped you to become President of

Armenia.

- Sure, they also helped. If I hadn't been in that organization, It would have been bad on Armenia. I have saved it from many disasters.

- Perhaps you will say that the 88 earthquake is their business.

- Not excluded. But at that time I had not yet taken part in the meetings. The only salvation is to submit the country to their supervision.

- The destruction of all systems of the country and bringing it to the verge of utter poverty was done by their instruction.

- That was a specially developed program, that saved the country from the ultimate destruction. The old had to be completely wiped out, to clear the way for the new.

- Yes, you established a corruption system at once. While in the war years you saved Azerbaijan from the eventual collapse. Was it also their decision?

- Of course. Sure, I remember, opening the second front in Southern Azerbaijan was scheduled by you, that was why I suspended you.

- There had to be a six-subject confederation established instead of Azerbaijan. You persecuted the persons involved in the program thus saving Azerbaijan, declaring that an integral Azerbaijan was necessary to establish diplomatic relations with. And so, today, in the same person of Azerbaijan Armenia has a mighty enemy on the west.

- No one would have authorized the obliteration of Azerbaijan. I remember, you had presented a new program in connection with the channels of communication. It was intended to convert Armenia into an important center of communication.

- History creates an occasion for that once in a millennium. And you failed it. We could have become a neighboring state to Russia.

- The Secret World Government rejected it, while "ZED" decided to eliminate you in this connection. I objected, saved, taking all responsibility upon myself. If I did anything wrong, say it, it is not late to correct my mistake. - A teasing smile was

playing on Georgik's face. - You are a notable intellectual, that is why I saved you. Another time the Kharabakh government decided to eliminate you. Do you remember "the Leonard's Case"? I saved you then. But you don't know. You are a demon, intellectual. But no one knows whom you serve.

- I serve my nation.

- The notion of nation is a false category.

- For certain Jewish circles besides those selected by Jehovah, all other nations are outside the law and false, - said Benjamin. - For America the concept of nation is false and invalid. Europe is intimidated by petty national movements. However, they don't interfere with the prosperous national communities, although they believe that all of them will merge in a giant crater. But the "Armenian" concept has a tremendous cultural legacy, which is a universal value. As an historian and a former disciple of the Great Mashtots Library of Manuscripts (Matenadaran), you know it well.

- We are supporters of globalization, and the notion of "nation" will impede the implementation of our programs. With those ideas of yours you become enemy No.1 for the ZEDs. They have invited you to clear out what it is that you represent. I will not be able to save you anymore.

- Are you trying to make another entry into the Big Politics?

- I have never gotten out of Politics. I must come back and save Armenia.

- The Nation will reject you.

- Something that does not make part of reality cannot hinder me. And if the mob rejects me, it will be one of their steps to self-destruction. That has been the reason of the Armenians losing their lands.

- Yes, because a Georgik has always been born in order to make a mess of everything.

- Without me the country will have no future. Go and tell that to your Nation.

- You would have ceded Karabakh to Baku.

- No, to Turkey. That is the way to salvation.

- I will not have anything to talk to you about, since we are

now in hostile trenches.

- You have already signed your death warrant. I was against you taking part in the Assembly, as you may have seen.

- You have yourself abandoned the Theater Square and arrived at the Assembly.

- It is OK, the boys will replace me.

- But the matters are going serious now. People are splashing from the square into the streets. Skirmishes will follow.

- That is not the worst thing that can happen. Whatever will happen is in our favor.

- And this is the leader of the country...- said Ben to himself, turned back and bumped into a tall woman. The latter was holding a goblet full of wine that she dropped and broke into pieces. However, the woman smiled at Ben politely.

- Benjamin, she said, don't you remember me?

There was a familiar clang to it. The glance and the smile were trying to align themselves to the faces lurking in the folds of memory.

- Oh, yes, Eliana Proniskaite, a famous spy from Vilnius. Of course, I know you, you filed a list of the Armenian intellectuals by the order of ZEDs.

- Yes, I have cropped the right info on everyone, only you bugged me. You remained an enigma to me. That was what I noted in front of your name. And now I am even more bewildered to find you here. That is fantastic. Me, too. What are you doing here? I have even heard that you are with the Satanics, dictating your will to the Troika. Added to that, you disorientate the MJ-12 members in the opposite camp.

- In due time you helped me with the data on the Azerbaijan leadership and their interrelations.

- I could have never given you this kind of data.

- After two tumbles of cognac there was no way to silence you, - said Ben with a smile.

- Yes, it was my only weakness.

- The only one and the principal one.

- I get it now. Getting to know the inside kitchen of the enemy, you added disinformation to the dinner being cooked in

Baku. Many leaders in Baku fell victim to your games. Though patriots, they are in jail for treason to date.

- In war, all means are legitimate.

- That is war, too. Ben, I am coming to Armenia soon, - said Eliana, - how do I find you? The "Shooshee" foundation, OK?

- You are welcome. If I get alive out of here.

- I will help you to get out. Only don't go without taking part in the Assembly. In that case I cannot help you at all.

The face of the man sitting opposite him seemed familiar. He smiled at Ben courteously. He answered with a shadowy smile.

- Can you remember me, - asked the man.

- I will be much obliged to you if you remind me, said Ben.

- Shooshee, Aslan's country house.

- But we haven't met.

- Artashes Melik-Beglarian, a ghost from Shooshee.

- Ah, ghost, of course, I couldn't have seen you, but my back aches even now, the body itches, your song stays in my ears, - said Ben, - did you find your son, Incense Arshavir?

-Not yet, but the ZEDs promised to help.

- Do you think they can help?

- They say that they oversee the world of the spirits.

- How did they find you?

- There is a web specialist named Vazgen, who can discover the spirits remaining in this world through virtual technology and can establish an oversight over them. The good thing is that he helps us to establish links with the world of reality.

- I have met your son in Shooshee, - said Ben. Ashkhen, my friend, knows where he is.

- How can I find him?

- If you come to your house in Shooshee early in the morning in three days, you will find your son there, said Ben.

- You did a wrong thing that you came to this Assembly, - said the ghost.

-Do you think it is dangerous?

- With regard to you there is a specially elaborated program. I have been charged with shadowing you. Do you remember we met in the backyard of your house?

- Sure, your song is still ringing in my ears.  
- Well, OK, nothing particular, but I used to sing with pleasure. And now if you don't become ZED, I will eliminate you. Beware.

- How come you appeared among them?  
- They got me at the weak place. They promised to help find my son.

- Understand, - said Ben, - I will help you.  
- I will help you, too. When you go out, you will depart at once. You can go to the chairlift, go up the mountain, and then get away by skiing downhill.

- My son is with me.  
- That will complicate the situation. Take him along. Well, the Assembly has started.

- Dear ZEDs, - spoke the chair, a slim, long-faced old man, with prominent cheek-bones and downcast eyes, - the meeting of our Board is taking place in the picturesque Tsakhkadzor for the first time, due to a number of circumstances. The small-sized Armenia has gradually occupied a significant place in the discussions of GK-3, and this cannot be disregarded, despite the fact that the MJ-12 programs have a completely different orientation. You know that the leader of the previous Armenian administration, the universally respected Georgik, is our active partner, whom we however could not have saved. He fell victim to an internal strife. First, before proceeding to the report, I suggest that we watch on your monitors an interesting excerpt of the Armenian Pagan history, that has been donated to us by our dear Benjamin.

Ben was surprised. He has never donated anything to the ZEDs. However, the screen showed his face, then there was the scenery of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Diutakan capital city, and the event on the square that he had witnessed, related to the finger-cutting sect. A young Jighb openly in front of the public reproduces the finger-cutting ritual. All that was shown on the screen in stunning detail. As to how and who had shot that scene, was hardly possible to say. However, Ben remembered that he had seen all that, or perhaps only imagined, and the images in his brain

screen were recorded by means of a special device. I wonder if people have resolved the mystery of penetrating into the brain? Perhaps this invention is retained by the ZEDs for themselves, so that when the world enter into a catastrophe, they would make use of it.

When the show finished, everybody clapped their hands.

- I extend my gratitude to Mr. Ben for the great pleasure that he afforded us with this small presentation. And now I will report on the scientific session. Four sections are to be arranged on climatic changes, on new technologies and on using them if need be, for capabilities of disaster prevention or rescue from the impending disasters of a certain section of humanity, or on a possibility of at least a rescue of the elite. A separate section was dedicated to genetically modified organisms. In this connection there is a provision of specially invited speakers. Discussions will be held on a possibility of organizing the cloned organisms into special task forces. We have to get ready today to the wars of tomorrow. A separate section will discuss the world financial crisis. We are committed to accelerate it, so as to partake in it ourselves and to find the way out of it successfully. We have to destroy the economic system, otherwise there is no way to ruin the Tripartite Alliance. The schedule has been meticulously elaborated, it remains only to introduce some specific clarifications. After the crisis the rudder of the world will turn out to be in our hands. This is the exitway for the salvation of the human civilization.

- And if the Tripartite Alliance should know?

- If no one of those present here informs, they will never know. It is so designed that everything will seem to be natural.

- But if, say, the US will afford the reserve assets to banks?

- We have foreseen it. Those assets will degrade rapidly, since the bank employees will distribute them among themselves as premium or award payments.

- What if in our midst there is a traitor, an enemy agent...

- There is not going to be any exit from here for an agent. Everything has been previewed, don't worry. Apart from these discussions the results of all other discussions will be published

in a separate book. From day to day we feel that the globe is a small place for the current population, which results in the worldwide disasters approaching at a very rapid pace. If we do not make specific steps, tomorrow it will be late. We are not helped either by wars, or by ethnic or religious confrontations, nor by our calls to stop the growth of the population. This Assembly is being attended by this country's previous leader, an active ZED Georgik Ter-Abasian. I give the floor to him.

During the war how could they having this type of president defeat an outnumbering and superbly armed aggressor, was beyond Ben's comprehension. "Thus, our acquisitions would have been greater, if this ZEDist hadn't been the country's President, - thought Ben.

Georgik Ter-Abasian, according to his wont, aligned the array of microphones in front of him, measured the hall with his sound eye and said:

- Dear members of the Assembly, I welcome your decision to convene the Big Assembly in Armenia. I have long hoped for this to take place. You know what efforts by my erstwhile government have been expended to implement the ZED Program. We halved the Armenia's population, tried to again halve it, however we could not suspend the inside coup. If MJ will decide to help our return to power, then it will have to extend a more solid and reliable support to our region. I think that my failure in the Presidential race will result in my seizing power in a few hours and eliminating the Tartar-Mongol Yoke.

- Is it possible that the Tartars have again reached Armenia?  
- interfered one of the ZEDs.

- What is the difference, a Karabakh clan does the same, answered the former President.

- Mr. Ter-Abasian, there has been an exodus of the Armeniency from your country, while other countries showed growth and prosperity. No other success like this. Our programs point out a reduction in global numbers, - pronounced the Chair,  
- and we mean a real and absolute reduction. Undoubtedly, we hail your efforts in helping to implement our common objectives. We have appreciated it and put you forward to be included in the



ZED Legion of Honor. Dear friends, it is my mission on the part of the Presidential Office to present the high award to an elder member of our Secret World Government.

The chair, accompanied by an ovation on the part of all those present, put a ribbon with an order on Ter-Abasian's shoulder.

- Dear friends, - announced the order-bearing Armenian ZEDist, - I thank you for the high honor and assure you that I shall ever since continue my service to the ideas of the Organization. If I succeed to come to power again with my supporters, we shall see it in ten days, then I promise that Armenia will be the first in the world to implement the Big Program. Only today I need help.

- This issue will be discussed at the meeting of the Presidium. You will be duly informed of the result.

- Why should the issue be left to the Presidium, our friend is raising the question to the administration, so, we have to respond, - a member of the Assembly spoke from the floor. His accent suggested to Ben that he was a representative of Turkey, probably one of the former Presidents of the country. - My country is prepared to help him. Tomorrow it will be late. In this country the electorate has been taught to sell the votes. This is the best opportunity afforded by Allah. Let us embrace it. How much would be needed to take hold of a million votes? This is our loyal man, and he wants two hundred million, we shall give a billion. One half is given by Baku and Ankara, the rest is on the Organization.

- The Armenians fulfilled their duty to our programs in 1915, said the Chair.

- It was us who implemented it, in fact we were the first ZEDs, - said the Turkish representative, - however the yataghan makes too much noise, let us revert to the new technologies.

- We suggest that the Turks keep away from the Armenians. You better take care of the problems in your country.

- We are trying to. The largest growth are the Kurds. We are trying to cap them, you all know about it.

- The wars have always stimulated the reproduction of

population. However, we have more serious problems. You see, our initiatives of the swine flu and other plagues have not yet initiated major devastations among the human populations. However, the new developments promise better success. This new causative agent will shortly get activated and gather strength, so the scientists will be powerless. It must only be that most of mankind should be obliterated. Of course, quite a lot of life-destroying agents have been discovered that will not spare the elite either.

- It is possible to enclose the elite in pre-arranged bunkers, and only then to release the agents. The saved elite will live happily. You must know that Noah did the same thirteen thousand years ago.

- This is not the way out. Is there any new suggestion?

- Can I talk, - addressed the Assembly Ben.

- Incidentally, this Assembly has invited one of the most active members of the KG-3 triplet, Mr. Ben, a widely known television and media personality, thus making the first positive step towards the triplet. So, in case following this Assembly he make a decision to join the membership of our Organization, we are prepared to adopt him. By the way, if he makes this step, I must declare that we have prepared an interesting proposition to be made to him. Mr. Benjamin, you are welcome.

- I see that here lunatics have gathered from all corners of the earth, said Ben, - The switched poles of Earth as described by David Suzuki is a legend, this disaster is not expected, therefore all your programming to annihilate 95 percent of the Earth's population is meaningless.

- What is your proof ?

- See the rate of melting ice at the poles. That means that the increased mass of the poles and skidding is imaginary. The disaster will strike from another point.

- Where is it?

- Melting will yield the raising of the sea level, and the continents will be flooded. The bunkers that you are going to build will go under the ocean. The problem is not to save the elite group, but to save the civilization. That is the only outcome.

So, this solution will require joint efforts of the whole international community including the Secret World Government.

- Do you have a proposal, Mr. Ben? Meanwhile, on behalf of those present my request is to measure your words and not to insult us. Otherwise we shall submit a complaint to the Triplet.

- Yes, my proposal is for you to stop this buffoonery and fall out to your homes.

Ben rose from his seat and left the hall.

His son Hovhannes waited at the exit.

- Dad, let us go to the forest, my air pistol is with me, the target is set, too. We shall compete.

- No, let us first go to chairlift, the situation has changed, - said Ben.

- Shall I order the skis?

- With full equipment, - said Ben.

Ben wanted to see whether the ZEDs will pursue him or not. They got to the chairlift in the car.

However, the ropeway was blocked by the police. It turned out that the country's President has entered the facility for a downhill ride. With regard to the President's security only specially invited people were admitted to the ropeway area. Meanwhile, when the President has had enough of skiing, is difficult to predict. Ben was compelled to submit to the established order, although he thought it was meaningless.

In one hour the President took off with his escort.

When Ben and his son started to change into skiing outfits, Hovhannes asked:

- Why are you disguising yourself, dad? As you are, no one will recognize you anyway.

- You, too, cover your face, lest they recognize you.

- What's happened?

- If you listen to what I say, nothing will happen.

Ben and Hovhannes reached the summit of the mountain. Ben had not skied for thirty years. He did some mental exercises, trying to adopt some positions bending his legs and body.

- Dad, can you go downhill on these skies? I cannot

remember you ever skiing.

-OK, son, never mind.

- Anyway, it is dangerous, you can break your leg.

Ben understood that the ZEDs would be sure to look for him, and that his invitation to the session had not been done in vain. Seeing armed people at the cable-car station, Ben crossed himself and slid down, hoping not only to God, but also to the devil that was inside him.

At the start it was unusual, then he broke in to skiing. Half-way he turned towards the forest with bushes and brushwood. The son followed. They hid behind bushes. A little later, four gunmen looking around, slid downwards.

- How long shall we stay here? - asked Hovik.

- We must go down to Tsakhkadzor using another way.

- Who are the gunmen following, you or me? - asked Hovannes.

- Why should they follow you?

-Well, I... one of them keeps looking at us and making some signs.

- He is a ghost from Shooshee, named Artashes. He came to help us.

- What ghost, dad, are you again writing a book about ghosts?

- No, this time the ghosts are in our life.

- Dad, one of them is my friend Abo. Remember, we used to work at the airport together. Then he was fired for forgery.

-Yes, then you got into some perilous situation through him.

- Father, let me call him. He came to help us.

-No, he came to blot us out.

- But he is Abo, my friend.

- There is no friend or mrend, he is an enemy. Open your eyes.

- I know how we can lose them. The ghost gunman made a sign that we go the other way from this place.

- Go ahead, - said the father.

A hundred meters down below, Hovik turned abruptly upwards. After passing a mountain valley, on its other side, they

slid through an opening between trees standing on a small upgrade. Then they headed for the Writers' Creativity House. Leaving the skis, they walked through deep snow. So they reached the city from where they could see the Writers' House.

Hovhannes took off a paper with a shooting target and fastened it to a tree, from a breast pocket he took an air gun.

- Are we going to shoot? - asked Ben.
- What else? Let us not go back to the Writers' House.
- Well, let me fire.

Ben stepped back and taking an aim fired. Hovannes, looking carefully at the target, exclaimed:

- Ten points, again ten...

All of a sudden, there was clatter of snow machines all around. Gunmen reappeared. Ben threw aside the air gun, took a firm grip on his son's hands and took off into the air. From above they saw the stunned gunmen looking out all around them.

- Dad, their commander is again my friend Abo.
- The Shooshee ghost is still among them.
- He is an enemy, too.
- No, he said he would help us get out of ZEDs grip.

One of them went up slowly. He soon reached Ben, dropped his weapon and clutched firmly on Hovhannes' arm. He was the Shooshee ghost.

The city center was like a boiling kettle.

- The Armenians are going crazy, - said Hovhannes.
- No, it is all going deeper.
- They are doing surgery without examination.
- Father, did you see Vazgen, he was talking to Georgik?
- Georgik is in Tsakhkadzor.
- You know well that Georgik has dualized.

And now Vazgen, too, is interested.

- I inquired, he is serving all at the same time, the Azeris, the ZEDs, Europe, now has contacted the Chinese. He serves you, too.

- That is what he does to coordinate all and control all. We have adopted a similar decision.

- Is he going to take decisions alone? Surprising.
- Nothing to wonder, I have cultivated him, now it is time to gather crops.
- Father, hold your imagination. It may be interesting for a literary novel, however, the real life wants another solution. Be informed, I trace Vazgen on the Web. Don't let him be responsible for too many things. If he wishes, he will make it very hot. And there were a few times he wanted to bust it, I deterred him from that.
- Leaving his son at the side of his living quarters, Ben slid further towards the city center. The ghost caught up with Ben.
- Don't rush, I cannot catch up, - said Artashes.
- I haven't noticed you following me.
- I want to say that the gunmen came to detain your son Hovhannes, rather than you.
- Son, why? - asked Ben surprisingly. What has he done? Did you come for that, too?
- No, I had been sent to shadow you, and I joined them accidentally.
- Were the men on sleds going to detain Hovhannes?
- Sure.
- Did Hovhannes know about it?
- He should have.
- Why did they want to arrest him?
- I am not quite aware of the situation with everyday life today. Does he work at the Airport?
- Yes.
- He has made a serious error.
- Do the ZEDs know about it?
- It seems they do. They will try to reach their goals through your son.
- What in your opinion should I do now?
- Keep an eye on your son lest they should jug him. It may however be late already.
- Why didn't you say earlier?
- There was no time. You were in a hurry.
- Well, thank you for everything.

The Opera Square was teaming with people. On the platform was the first President with his henchmen. Ben froze for a moment at the top of the meeting and felt a strong field of the mob impregnated by a joint idea. This specific magnetic field was induced, that united the people of differing ideas and mentalities around a common purpose: One of the speakers failed to grab the crowd's favor. He was hooted off the stage and kicked out of the movement. Ben felt the strength of the common idea. When three persons gather around an idea, be it stealing, making a new device, killing a man, or staging a coup, they become a merged unit. The unity of five people is an entity of another level, ten people – still another. The more an entity is a celebrity, the farther back is the retreat of the personality. Society-entities have their eyes, arms and bodies. Benjamin felt a hazardous strain in the mob. Georgi and the speeches by his henchmen made that strain monolithic and expedient. Georg smiled self-contentedly, one eye glittering, despite anxiety in the depth of his soul. The intention was to gather a million people, however, Boryan, the smart man of Karabakh, the “Tartarmongol”, as he himself said at yesterday's Assembly, slowed down his steps, and the next morning sent the police to the Theater Square, to search the tents and to drive away the people. Georgik understood that it was a step by Boryan to accelerate the process, to resolve it easily.

But George was taking part in the meeting at Tsaghkadzor, thought Ben, how could he host the meeting at the same time? He must have been invaded by Satan as well. So, it is all the satanic tricks. Ben heard a voice from behind.

- Ben, - said the voice, and Ben recognized it as George's, - don't worry, it is your country's former President. You are not alone, who is endowed with Satanic abilities. I was sure you would escape from the ZEDs' trap. It is only that it is a pity that two mighty forces are in the opposite positions. If we join, we can move mountains. Ben examined his face carefully. Of the real George there was only an outline that remained. From the inside there appeared Satan. He even caught a glimpse of a long tail that George the First could not conceal.

- Let the mountains alone, - said Benjamin, - do you have a link to the George on the podium.

- Of course, he can do nothing without my knowledge. He is my second, pretending to lead the revolution, while everything is in my hands. Come, let's come together and take the power. I will make you PM.

- I will not let you or your ZEDists do it.

- But you must know that there is no power that will stop what has been predetermined.

With regard to the current situation, Georgi always wanted to create a counterplay. A compulsory countermeasure is a mob procession towards the French Embassy on a nearby square. The guys were instructed to incessantly aggravate the situation. He was sure that the authorities would not be able to resist the tension. And if General Manvel's Corps should enter the city, the situation will become crazy and unmanageable. The power will be served to him on a tray.

Pacing the platform right and left, Georgi felt that he was being observed from the sky, and he cast a look upwards. Probably, he hoped to see his second EGO.

-Do you want to ruin Armenia? - asked Ben.

- I am saving Armenia. "Z" has resolved: it is inevitable, if you try to interfere, you will be simply eliminated.

Before Ben's eyes puffs were rushing up and down and right and left in different colors. The movements were so rapid that he could not determine not only the forms of the puffs, but also the colors. Ben decided, in order to see them to move the glance at the same speed they do. Ben succeeded in seeing the real image for at least as much as an instant. That was of definite color, perhaps a mass not as thick as a cloud, while what was hidden under the cloud-like mass, was difficult to determine. This type of mass slowed down the movement, wrapping around Ben. Ben knew now that they were not like the Christmas pictures with angels or demons. The mass floating around came close to Ben and was as if swallowing him little by little. Ben did not know, whether it was the way those entities ate things, or there was another purpose to it. Ben gave up. Let it be whatever



will be. The strange entity seemed to cling to all his parts of the body. Sticky things, they generated a tremor, as if it were electrical impulses. A little later it issued a sound like snorting, let go of Ben and with a buzzing sound ripped upwards. "I wonder if it is the underworld, or it is purgatory, where the decision is taken whether to go to Eden or Hell. A mass suddenly stopped his progress. There appeared a clear outline of a hairy and strange creature. It looked like an evil spirit as described by my dying uncle Aramais of Tonashen. He saw the evil spirits that came to take away his soul, they moved on walls and on the ceiling. They were patiently waiting.

- Can't you see those hairy creatures, - said my uncle, - see, that one, how he is looking at me. Drive them away.

Then they brought a woman who lit candles, prayed and the spirits vanished.

Ben saw two masses of different colors, maybe lovers, stuck to one another, dancing in the air. Endlessly laughing. What type of creatures were those, Ben ignored. And he certainly needed to possibly gather information, the matter is, no one knew anything about them. Perhaps it is good that people know nothing about this world, or else they would kill them, the last couple would be squeezed into a zoo cage, to be preserved as a species.

Air again was filled with multicolored puffs and flakes moving about with great vivacity. A big pink puff came very close, opening its inside. A spirit sat in front of a big shield and started to press the keys with quick movements of a hacker. Ben understood that the movements of the masses of people are controlled just from this center. Meanwhile, Georgik Ter-Abasian thought that it was he who controlled the movement.

At that moment a turbulent city again appeared before Ben's eyes. The mob moved from the Theater Square along city streets chanting: "Georgik President, Georgik President...". Standing thoughtfully on the platform George 2 came out of the square, escorted by bodyguards, boarded his automobile and took off. The Moor has done his duty, let him go. Georg 1 hovered in the central city area where human groups were

gathering, giving commands here and there. Ben saw that the mob had already become uncontrollable, which was the purpose of the former President of the country. Ben tried to explain to the people that they should keep away from committing violence, that it was not in their interests to annihilate the state, that George had misled them pushing them to destruction. However, the unhinged mob listened to no one anymore. For a moment Ben saw George's shaken face. He was giggling quietly... No one has ever seen this dismal man laugh heartily. Around the French Embassy the police encircled the demonstrators very tightly. However, the bullet-proof wall of policemen excited the mob even more. Many people carried metal rods. At that moment Ben met the red beret Abo face to face.

- Albert, Mr. Harutiunian..., - called Ben.

He wanted to ask what he was doing in Tsakhkatzor and why he ran after them. Probably he could not hear, since he was absorbed in some business. He was holding a grenade in his hand. Ben noticed that the safety ring was pulled out. Ben thought he would not let him throw it into the crowd. But he threw it towards the police. A policeman noticed the grenade under the feet of the soldiers, at the same time throwing himself down and covering the grenade with his body. The grenade exploded throwing the officer's body into the air.

As viewed from the air, this part of the city reminded of a boiling cauldron. Some vehicles were burning. Some groups of people were looting the stores. The emerging soldiers of Special Forces started to shoot aiming at the crowd. That sobered the people up. The horrified crowd dispersed.

Ben saw some multitude of unknown bodies moving towards him in the air. George withdrew. Ben went down and mixed with the crowd. He tried to talk the people into retreating, saying that George had cheated them. No one wanted to hear. The spring was wound up and released. Stones flew at the policemen. Ben already knew that it was to be Georgik's defeat.

It seemed that someone had started to do an evil trick on Ben and was throwing him now into the real, now into the unreal cloudy incomprehensible world by simply pressing the on-and-

off button. Now again, instead of the undulating city there appeared a strange world with its cloudy masses. Some mass stuck out in front of him. It seemed to Ben that a smile was playing on its face, although there was neither a smile, nor joyful sounds. Then the mass spread on the ground as if to invite Ben to lie on it. Ben avoided direct contact. The mass gathered again and rose upwards, leaving in its place a small cloudy puff. Ben touched it. It was soft. The counter-moving masses carefully surrounded them. It was difficult to guess, why the devil inside them had brought them into the real world. He wanted to hide from some danger for a time. Some people are hunting him or the devil inside him, or both. Or maybe it was the devil's birthplace and he brought him there to show him to his next of kin. But when he was coming in, he looked like a man.

A yellowish cloudy puff came close to him, and imbibed him as a whole. Ben felt that he was dragged away. First he tried to get free. Hands and feet went freely through the mass, however he could not release himself from it. When moving aside, the cloudy mass moved along with him. He decided to surrender himself to the will of the mass. He needed to examine the situation and to determine, in what world he was. Ben thought that if he told people about the world he had seen, they would not believe, would say he got mad. He started to get adapted. The mass started to gradually solidify from the inside, then some sticky pimples started to adhere to him. He tried to free himself. Perhaps those are vacuum suckers. One could not rip them off. There were two holes for breathing. Perhaps they will draw the juices. His whole body felt colic and pain. Thousands of needles plunged into his body. Particularly painful were three needles plunging into the head. Ben remembered the cats with current-carrying needles in their heads at the Institute of Physiology. Current excited different brain centers, and cats' reactions were measured. The resulting thousands of diagrams showed the cat's attitude to the excitations. Possibly, he might be an experimental animal for them. "Let them do whatever they like, lest his flow of thoughts should be interrupted", - thought Ben.

A strange face showed an outline, then determined itself.

We have little interest for man, - it said, - we monitor and study the microbes populating the planet Earth. In actual fact, they are the hosts of the planet.

Some suckers turned off, allowing him to talk.

- And man? - exclaimed Ben in surprise.

- People are controlled by the microbes. Just inside you there are billions of microbes. We have a direct link with them. We are interested, what they want to do through man. 27 thousand years ago they penetrated into a Neanderthal man, repaired his brain, the embryo, made everything hereditary, and then with the aid of the homo sapiens started to generate the society and to control the world.

- And now, are those microbes controlling the world?

- Of course.

- Now there are certain things going on in Yerevan...

- Sometimes the situation gets out of control. People do not obey the microbes or their laws.

- Maybe you tell the people, what the matter is.

- No, this is not an outcome, since people were from the beginning indoctrinated that they were the hosts of the planet, they even thought that they alone were clever in the world. The microbes have created a very complicated structure to govern the world. They have much more ruthless wars going on there than with the people.

- But at the time of our wars are the microbes being annihilated?

- Those wars are also the concern of the microbes.

- My God, only please, do not let people know about it.

- They will know nothing. If you try to inform, they will think that you are nuts. There have been many cases like that. They struggle for every man. And it is not always that the microbes manage to conquer the viruses, the microbes causing diseases. Certain restricted means have been left to humanity so that they should think as if they are in control of the world.

There is a group MJ12 that creates and disseminates agents to annihilate people.

- In the microworld there is also a brutal struggle going on.

They have been using people for a long time. There is now hunting for human brains going on in the microworld. They establish parties and groups, seize places in the Parliament.

- When I report to the European Union assemblies, the texts in my head are processed by the microbes.

- By all means.

- I went to Sumgait...

- Without them it would be impossible. They ensured your security.

- May I convey my gratitude to the Supreme Government of the Microbes?

- They have no concept like that. Their degree of cognition is very high.

- It would be nice if they gave some to the people.

- No, there is a borderline, you cannot give more. Human civilization is a very fragile thing.

- Do you think it is good?

- Of course, it is the best creation of the microbes.

- And what are their source of data?

- The human brain, the Internet...

- The computers are full of viruses.

- The microbes watch and prompt the methods of countering them.

- A complicated system. How can they control it all?

- Well, states, armies, governments...

- In 1915 the Turks massacred the Armenians.

- Not everything in the microworld is going smoothly.

- And big discoveries in specific fields, aren't they the products of human society?

- Of course, if the microbes decide to allow, people can do nothing.

- Well, and what is your contact with the microworld?

- The microbes have created another world, in parallel to your world, in order to control the development of society.

- At the Tripartite Alliance I will certainly recount about our meeting. It would be right to establish connection with you, i.e. the connection should be bidirectional.

- Microworld says nothing about it, therefore this type of initiative can be unsafe.

- Inside me there is another entity.

- Inside you there are billions of entities...

- Only an infinitesimal part of our brain is being used.

- The time will come, human civilization will feel the need to use the capabilities of the brain, then everything will be in its proper place.

- In case the disasters do not destroy what people have acquired in the last ten thousand years.

- We are also watching. Some disasters can be prevented, others cannot be countered.

-Earth can become a desert, like Mars.

- Do you think Mars has been inhabited?

- No doubt. People reiterate the same mistakes.

- I agree, the planet has a fragile system. It can be subjected to climatic changes, and your technological achievements will be inefficient. But the microbes think about it, so that your seed will be preserved, and in the future another place will be inoculated.

- What about the technological achievements, are they going to be lost?

- There have been civilizations that have been lost in the world.

- I want to go back to our world.

- You have always been there.

The changes of sensations are inside you, there is nothing more to it.

Ben's eyelids were gone heavy, he closed his eyes, although wanted very much to keep under control the ongoing situation. When he reopened his eyes, the breath of spring, the smell of flowers, the noise of the city prompted that he had returned to earthly life. It is possible that there has been a change in the feeling of the environmental change. Evidently, in the same place and volume there are two existences.

From the midst of traffic noise he recovered the trills of a swallow. It was as if the swallow intended to muffle the city clatter. Living in this widespread noise people forget the clear

sounds of nature. There was a sound of barking dogs. The group of dogs, still not quite ripped off from the bustle of last night, perhaps after having defeated the packs of the other neighborhoods and conquering their females, enjoyed their dominance in this part of the city, forgetting as it were that the real hosts were people. A group of eight dogs was going to cross the street. The female ran across the street. The males followed with their noses stuck out for the female smell. The cars slowed down waiting for the dogs to cross. However, the female decided that she had nothing to do that part of the street and turned back. The impatient drivers hooted. One giant jeep leaped forward. The dogs could hardly avoid being run over by the extra-wide tires probably designed for the sands.

Ben rushed self-forgetfully, thinking that he had not had any occasion to talk to his son.

The apartment window was open. Eva had always warned: "Son, keep the apartment windows closed from wind, rain, thieves, dust". However, Hovannes had always been inattentive and absent-minded. Ben slid in through the open window. Hovannes was not in. He hurried out of home and quickly walked towards the police station. Two characters were entering the police station holding his son under his armpits.

It was as if a few tons of cargo were added to his shoulders. Ben tried to take off. But he could not. Tried to find a supporting point with his gaze, but failed. Despite the weakness in his knees, he came staggering in. He wasn't even aware whether he is visible or not. Passing through the portal it rang. The officer looked at it amazed, came up to examine it.

- Again gone mad, stupid, - he grumbled.
- What is it, - asked his companion.
- Nothing. A runaway signal.

It was clear to Ben that he became visible. He climbed the stairs. He has been to the corridors of KGB several times. To acquire the renewed power to fly, he knew that he had to see Hovannes, otherwise, he was literally desperate. He opened the doors of the rooms one by one. At one place, a young girl was sitting in a guy's lap. They were so busy that they did not notice

Ben. Anyway, he remained invisible. He suddenly felt tired, turned closer to the handrail. Hovhannes went through the passage escorted by two men. Forgetting fatigue, Ben followed them. He shot up upward, coming forward and landing in front of them. Hovhannes stopped short, feeling a new presence.

- What is it, tired?

- No, there is something else here, - said Hovik, looking his father straight in the eye and smiled. He knew already that Father was with him. At the same moment, three masked characters suddenly appeared sending Hovhanes' escort to the floor with bursts of automatic fire. One of them removed his mask, giving a friendly tap of Hovik's back.

- Brother I would never let them touch you.

It was Z Abo. He held Hovik tight under his arm and pulled him down the stairs with his friends. Getting down the stairs, they killed the guards and got out into the open. A jeep slowed down at the entrance, Hovhannes was pushed in, they got into another vehicle and set off.

Ben failed to see, what car Ben was packed in. He crisscrossed all the city streets, rushing from one vehicle to another, but could find his son in none of them. Of course, if the ZEDists have taken away his son, they will keep him...

Who can help find the son? Georgik is ruled out. Ben remembered the fate of the Armenian National Army's fighters. By the order of Georgik, the Erkrpah fighters massacred them ruthlessly. Probably, the Shooshee ghost Artashes can help. However, could he find him? Perhaps he is already in the underworld... In this state of mind Ben appeared before Vazgen. Vazgen perceived Ben's presence, he smiled lightly.

- It is good that you have successfully escaped from the ZEDs.

- Vazgen, find Albert Hovhannisian. Who is he?

- He kidnapped Hovhannes.

- Do you know about that?

- It was shown on TV, Channel 1. The computer monitor is flooded by the details of kidnapping. The kidnappers had made an announcement of the action in advance. The appropriate



entities did nothing to counter that, only the media men set up hidden cameras.

- And can I inquire, where did they take him?

- To divert attention, the data will be numerous.

- That is what I need.

- OK. Here is the list. If you want descriptions of the areas, I can submit them in five minutes. And Albert is commander of the task force for special operations, ZED Secret Army, and Georgik's right hand at the same time. They have already planned a terrorist act against President Elect.

- Murder?

- No. Abduction.

- A new approach, isn't it? As in the movies.

- But not too good. Rather, stupid.

- Yes, killing will exempt from many troubles.

- But why did Abo betray Hovik?

- Well, a few days ago, Hovik refused to take up a new case. He also decided to eliminate an undesirable man who could have prevented an implementation of the ZED programming. One can appoint a new man who can realize his will.

- How did you get those data?

- It is my secret.

- Isn't there a problem in connection with me?

The door opened and Ben slid out through the window. Some strange feeling started to nag him. It seemed that someone was persistently calling him.

- Who is that, Lord God, - said Ben to himself. - Ah, talking to myself lately. It is interesting, Satan is in me, but my inner voice is calling to God. This mighty voice, where can it be from? Have the aliens come to earth? I don't any more believe in the rumors circulating about the UFOs. The Guardian Angel? But he himself comes to see me, prompting, dictating the forthcoming steps, warning and protecting. We are always sure that we have a watchful and protective angel, who warns and protects against trouble. We do not any more imagine that our angels go through enormous difficulties with regard to those they protect. When I went to Sumgait, the city of heinous crime and villainous

murderers, I was quiet, since I had commissioned everything to my guardian angel. However that angel to protect me, had to fight against the angel supporting the person who threatened my life. If fate is determined at some angelic assembly, one has to make a speech, to convince everyone that his defendant has the universal human, or universal angelic, or universal microbial special mission, and then vigilantly follow that the Azeri killer's angel does not make his defendant take up a weapon and shoot a bullet from the rear ambush, to kill his patron. Well, in Sumgait he managed to stay intact for one week, and then to communicate with Artsakh. But now how to save his work from the efforts of the mayor Ero Zako? Or maybe the angels of the corruption-stricken are of another type? If they occupy high positions in the society, that means that they have helpers of another kind, who conquer the opposing angels claiming to occupy that position. But what if the tycoons' and top-level executives' angels are envious of writer Benjamin's angels? Ben remembered one of the Armenia's tycoons who used to say, head tilted aside: "Folks, I have everything, for my grandsons and great grandsons to the seventh generation, I have provided them with everything, now thinking about you. It was ordered by his angel, that having gathered a lot of money he disregarded his own angel. Of course, if he listened to the angel, he would believe that what he had accumulated largely belonged to the people, since he got rich through impoverishing many people of the country and of the society. And what if my protection was done not by the angel but by my mother? It's been twenty-five years since I lost her. However mentally I speak to her every day. She is in the underworld, we are still connected with the umbilical cord. If it were iron, it would go rusty. It is of gold, and invisible. She is there, for me living. Still ringing in my ears is the bunch of keys in my mother's hands, the keys of the store house. It was the time of war. Locked in my apartment I was impatiently waiting for the sound of keys awarding happiness. I rip off my forehead from the window glass, hitting the glass with my little hands joyfully. Like a dry river bed filling with water, my inside is merging with a sweet blissful feeling. And then on the

other side of the window, my mother's happy face shines. Mother's one-hour break made me happy. Looking at each other, and for a moment the happiness freezes, for the eyes are filling with tears. I missed I ignored who, since I felt the longing after mother. Then I learned that she was waiting for her husband Avanes who had gone to war. From between the wet vocal words came:

- Your father will come, my little son, he will certainly come.

Ben felt that mother's love to him in the situation when far away (although very close, even inside them, about which Ben cannot even guess), has not waned. If not mother, then who? Rev. Harutiun flashed in Ban's mind. Of course, he had predicted his bad day, the misfortune, asking God to help Ben.

Ben must find his son, however he thought it was expedient to communicate with God through Rev. Harutiun. He boarded the fix-run to Ejmiadzin. However, the speed of the vehicle was for him not a waste of time. His heart wanted to escape from the body, to leap away. What happened to his son? If they put him into a slammer in KGB, it is difficult to get out. He couldn't make to have it out, to clear up everything. Ben had a careful look at the girls occupying the vehicle. Trousers hold tightly the buttocks and thighs. One girl moved her pelvic area so expertly that the boys visually escorted her all the way through. Of course, at home she trained for hours in front of the mirror, demonstrating her gait to her companions, and then, feeling the glances nailed to her bottom, she polished further her movements. She was exempt from the predicament of having a small bum, since she stole the boys' glances from beautiful girls. That is what our boys need, the sexy movements, the promise of pleasure from crazy movements of the ass. Well, go and bust, the girls exploding in the street, you can only moan and groan, having no real idea on how to cause pleasure. A man about forty boarded a fix-run taxi and stared at girls, hunting for their gazes. A stunning girl cast a contemptuous look at the man.

The last time Ben saw him was in the courtyard when he was in a pigeon-house built of wood. Following the example of the great worshipper of God Francheska, he has kept pigeons

all his life. Ben knew that Rev. Harutiun in his life and behavior was the purest believer and worshipper of Christ. Without looking at Ben he said:

- I knew that by the will of God you had to come today.

- Yes, I heard and came, - said Ben.

- This is a great progress, when a man becomes available through the will of God. That means that you have come under light. I have seen you at the large Universal Assembly.

- What, were you there?

Rev. Harutiun again smiled with self-content.

- No, I could not be present there. They don't let me enter an ordinary church nowadays. I have not only been unfrocked, I have also been condemned. However by the will of God I am also at every place, without partaking I see everything.

- Did you see me?

- Sure, It was interesting to hear you talk, however you lacked the light of God.

- OK, Holy Father, I have a question to you.

- I am ready to hear, God willing, I will answer.

- Does a soul have sensitivity, or does it not?

Rev. Harutiun stroked his long gray beard, smiled complacently.

In a living man it is the soul that feels. The body has no properties of feeling.

- What about pain?

- The signal goes to the brain, while the feeler is always the soul. It is through the soul that the connection with the underworld is established.

- But a dog too feels pain.

- And also joy, taste, danger... A dog also has a soul, but it is the human soul that stays alive, it is the most perfect in quality. A dead man's soul is alive, it feels and can recognize everything. We know that man without a soul is nothing more than soil.

- Well, this question is 1500 years old, it was asked to the scholar Matte by King Vachakan of South-East Armenia.

- The king of Albania.

- Yes, they invented the name Albania in order to spread the Armenian culture using the Church and to expand the realm of the Armenian Church. Vachakan was the last king of this land.

- Yes, be blessed, a holy man..., he built as many churches as there are days in a year, a God-loving man.

- I have met him in his palace in Diutakan. Was it real, or was it a dream? The matter is, I want to clarify my position as well. Can you see me?

- I can feel your presence, that is what is important for me. But you must feel your material situation yourself.

- I can touch myself, I know that I am, although my double is in the world of objects. It is just that I sometimes become transparent.

- Nothing happens without the knowledge of God. The celestial has awarded you a special status, that means you have a special mission. To some measure the veil of darkness is on you. You must get free from the darkness and see the light of God.

- God could dispel that darkness, said Ben.

- He wishes you to make that forward step, yourself will win and reach. You have to cleanse yourself to reach the light. As to your encounters with Vachakan, I have to know the precise answer. That only God can tell me. I am most interested in the purpose of the meeting. An encounter once in 1500 years cannot be the end in itself. I would advise not to think about the mechanisms and the Essence associated with the encounter. You have been given a mission, go! God has opened a door to you, go in without delay or doubt. Leave the rest of the things to God or His representative.

I saw the ritual of pagan sects.

- What ritual in particular?

- The severance of fingers.

- The flaying, started from thumbs? Vachakan eliminated that by establishing churches and schools in the country of the Lezgins. I think, archeologists have lately found the devil's throne standing on four human-like legs.

- Vachakan killed all pagan priests using their own rituals.

- By thumb-cutting?
- Yes.
- For all the world to see?
- Yes.
- It is brutal, but it looks like a solution. But you are too worried.
- Yes, they kidnapped my son. Where they took him, I don't know
- Is it because of you?
- Yes. There are evil forces, evidently, and I am standing very much in their way.
- I will pray for you and your son. God will help you, he will open the light to you.

## CHAPTER 8

### WOLF BIRMANN

Ben saw a city below. Gothic structures with pointed spires looked familiar and even closely related. He guessed at once that he was in Europe. Of course, it was his Germany. The multistoried outline prompted that it was Leipzig University. A fragment of familiar native conversation reached his ear. It was the Saxonian dialect with the thick trilling and hissing sounds in one breath. E.g., “Funfzig phennig” was pronounced as Funfzish Phenish” or “Leipzig” as “Leipzish”. Mentally, or really, Benjamin appeared in a German city. Of course, it was his favorite Leipzig, where Petra lived, his love of younger years, or rather of his German years. The face of a woman sitting on a bench near the Russian Church looked familiar. Can it be Petra? She's become heavier, gained weight, but the same smiling face. Ben had no doubt that he was looking at Petra Zeitscheln. He looked at her smiling broadly.

He did not know, whether that encounter was a game of fate, or it was again configured all inside his own self.

- Did you think I wouldn't recognize you, - said Petra, - you have not changed at all.

-Thirty-seven years have passed.

- Years don't matter. I keep talking to you every single day. I never forget the Armenia that you narrated.

- So, you haven't been to Armenia?

- I have. Exactly as you have told, even more.

- Why didn't you buzz me?

- You know that my husband is jealous, and he warned me: "No contact with that Armenian Benjamin". For me, the German woman, a husband's word is the Law.

-Then you should have lived in Armenia.

- When I went to Armenia, I remembered your words that a woman accustomed to the German environment could not live in Armenia. Meanwhile, I was sure that I could live in Armenia with you.

- But I was afraid that after having children you would take them and go to your father's house, and that I would miss the children and follow you.

- It wouldn't be bad for you in Germany.

- Yes, I would sell my pictures and we could do well.

- Of course, still in the 70s you had a good name here.

- To whom would I then leave the fate of Karabakh?

- Wouldn't they do without you?

- They wouldn't, particularly with regard to information wars.

- Have your services been appreciated?

- No.

- See!

- It is the result that matters.

- No, the result is not enough.

- Yes, what I have done has never initiated a school. Now we suffer losses in this field.

- However, I had been prepared to share the fate of your native Karabakh.

-Were you interested in the war of Karabakh?

-Of course, I watched a film with you, and as I understood, your partners. A certain Don...

- Don-Sakerian, yes, he, like hundreds of people, has shot films using my materials under their names. Petra, tell me the truth, are you sorry that you are not with me?

- I loved you. But I am a mother of five children, and have no time to be sorry, although mentally I am with you every day. It is simply your influence, it is very deep and...

...indelible, ha-ha-ha...

- I remember the nights we spent in the orchard. Once you picked up roses from the orchard, to give them to me. It was my birthday. They never do things like that in Germany. And you, did you ever remember me?

- I have written a book.

- Has it been published?

- Not yet, but it will, one day.

- And what?

- You are the main character. At the entrance to the skyrise in "Eighteenth of October" street a man looked at me with hatred in his eyes.

- After we spent a few nights in my parents' bed, my mother came back and for a whole week she was gathering your hairs from the bed sheets.

- Your father loved me and was ready to yield her daughter.

- You were the best son-in-law for my father. But do you remember that a representative of the USSR Embassy used to follow us in the streets of Leipzig? You were rather scared. We demonstrably parted for him to drop us. Then we met in the next street and he was gone.

- No wonder one should be scared. He reported me to the KGB, And that is a terrible grinding machine...

- When I went to study in Rostow, I then knew what country you lived in.

- Your "Stasi" does not trail far behind. I had sent an invitation to Wolf Birmann, the German Politburo refused, while "Stasi" sent a complaint to KGB: "Your citizen interferes in the internal affairs of our country".

- Did KGB suppress you?

- They decided to first meet Birmann, to organize his



presentations, so as to provide a pretext for his arrest. As to me, I was praying for Wolf not to come. And indeed, he couldn't come, for he was stripped of his GDR citizenship. It seems that Stasi saved Birmann by this step.

- And you, too.

- I thought of how to inform that KGB was staging a provocation.

- You were a lucky dog. Your Mountainous Karabakh had become my homeland.

- Thank you.

Tell me about yourself.

- Remember, I had a friend in Rostow who had read your letter to me and banned me from having any connection with you.

We got married, had a child, then he suddenly disappeared.

- Did you get married again?

- Do you know him?

- Is his name Peter? Once or twice while kissing me you whispered his name.

- True? Did it really happen?

- But I have told you that.

- A short fifty-year-old man came up to Petra and kissed her.

- Peter, do you remember Benjamin, you admired his football tricks.

- Yes, it was in 70 or 71, Benjamin, the Armenian. The boys from the Dresden "Dynamo" loved your technique. Then we understood why the Ararat boys played football so well. - He addressed the woman, - Petra, did you invite Benjamin to visit us?

- I was waiting for your invitation.

- Well, then, you are invited...

- OK., I will call and come, - said Ben and left, then he thought that he did not know Petra's phone number. Well, then, if he (the one inside) can arrange such encounters, let him also get her number, - thought Ben.

Out of nowhere appeared the face of the 70-year-old driver. He was a heavily built man with a permanent smile on his face.

Thirty-five years ago he had to take Ben from Leipzig to the Berlin railway station. He asked to let his wife come along, they hit the road an hour earlier, to gather mushrooms in the forest. Ben agreed. When the Wudkes were picking mushrooms in the forest, Ben found a horse's skull, stuck a stick in the ground and fitted the skull at the end. With tall pines, the skull looked impressive. Ben thought that people must be able to choose the right places for relics, so that they should be understood and perceived in the right way. When the Wudkes came back and saw the Ben-made relic, they could not contain their admiration. Years had passed since that event, when he occasionally met his friend Ashot Yuzbashian in a street of Yerevan.

- Benjamin, remember the head you put up in the German forest that old Wudke forwarded a message: "Das Kopf noch steht dort". "What head, what forest?", - I asked, - and Wudke answered: "Tell it to Benjamin, he will sort it out".

Now Ben wanted to be on that glade, to rehabilitate a similar memory. One had to look for it at the right side of the highway to Berlin. Descending slowly, he saw the glade from above, and was amazed. Dug in the ground was a very solid wooden block with the same horse skull at the top. The wood was frozen into a concrete foundation from beneath. Engraved into the wooden block was a legend: "Benjamin, 1971". Ben was glad that his piece of art was 35 years old, was preserved, however when reading his name, the visitors could think that it was his grave, or perhaps "Ben" was the name of some renowned horse.

He got a penknife out of his bag to add "Autor" at the start of the legend.

Ben felt a desire to lie down right there in the grass, to sleep. However, the next moment he saw another city down below. He was spinning around a huge gothic monastery compound. He thought that it was the Naumburg Monastery that he had visited with his friend artist Arnd Schutheiss. However, the fever seemed to be too high for the small place like Naumburg. Moreover, he could not see the big Crucifix on the wall. That means, it is the Monastery of Cologne. He got down on a green field and walked to an alley sitting on the first bench. What

surprise had been prepared for him by his insider, was not so easy to guess. The only thing that he felt was that the one inside was choking with laughter. We shall see who is going to be the last to laugh, thought Ben. "You are getting stupid again, Ben, - said the inner voice, - we are going to laugh both. I am going to do only good things to you". "I ignore, who I am, and what my situation is, but you are laughing". "You are in the best of situations, trust me, and all is going to be good", - spoke the inner voice.

Judging by the appearance of the gathering, one could guess that some important person had died. However, there was no one in the coffin. The dead man, instead of being laid in the coffin, was hanging in the lid standing upright, The lid having bulgings at the sides, the arms covering the bulgings. The inside of the lid was covered with scraps of paper filled with poetry, so from the light breeze they quivered and produced a hissing sound. The dead man's clothes fluttered under the wind, and it looked as if there was no body below his waist. Ben saw that he was still alive and talking to the folk come for funeral. No, he was not conversing but rather reciting poetry in German, or even singing. Of course, it was Wolf Birmann. Ben could in no way tell whether he was singing or reciting. He had been one of the leaders of anti-socialist movement. It is interesting, is he against this order, too? Of course, he is displeased with the process of the two Germanys merging and perhaps with the loss of moral and spiritual values. For sixty years there has been change of power in Germany, so he has always been in the midst of opposition. Ben remembered that his situation had always been much the same.

-Why did you come, you wretched Satan, you have nothing to do with me, - he called on a tall old man in-between the verses of the song, you know, I have no respect for you, you were a lousy chancellor.

-You are wrong, - said the man, who had been a chancellor and was so disliked by Birmann.

-Get lost, or else, there, the hairy creatures are coming, I will tell them to take you to hell in my place.

-You have to decently die yet, what is it, your soul has flown off, but the body still lives. Are you aware of your situation?

-And you, you have had no soul at all...

The former chancellor looked around, and, finding no familiar faces, left displeased.

What is going on, I understand nothing, - said Ben to a stranger.

Oh, yes, it is the new order, Herr Benjamin, - said the stranger smiling. A familiar smile. Of course, it is his old-time friend, he presented himself as Rolf Suchlike, it's been twenty-five years since we last met, do you remember me? But I came to meet you. I have a question to you with regard to inviting Wolf Birmann to Armenia.

-I am all ears, Rolf.

-When I was in jail, one from Stasi told me that you were an agent of KGB, so that I should stay away from you.

Rolf was looking Ben directly in the eye.

-And you easily believed that?

- I have given it a lot of thought, however how can you know, you don't want to joke with the Soviet KGB, it is a rather serious organization.

I prayed that Wolf do not visit Armenia, since the KGB was really preparing to do bad things.

You could have written a letter.

- My letters were read with particular interest...

- What is it you say, said Wolf from above, having followed Rolf and Ben's conversation.

Ben looked up and remembered the Crucifixion of Christ. The crucified Christ prior to being pierced with a spear had been communicating with people, assuring them that he would come again to lead them to the bright future.

-We are talking about you, Wolf, answered Rolf, - you recognize this man, don't you, he is Benjamin from Armenia.

-Ben, Ben, I had been looking for you for years, then I learned that you changed your name. Why didn't you invite me

to Karabakh, I was ready to fight on your side. I would be followed by the whole Germany.

-If you go down from that hanger, I will take you to Karabakh right away, - said Ben.

Hey, bring me down from this stupid coffin. I still have a mission in Karabakh. I want to die in Karabakh.

- Why die, when you can get canonized...

A stroke of genius, to become a Saint in Karabakh. Germans, think: the destiny of Germany, and perhaps the destiny of all Christian civilization is determined in Karabakh. Call Obama, Sarkozy, Medvedev, Merkel, let them come and see where the rat smells. Well, hurry up and remove me from this place.

But, Herr Birmann, there is an established ritual, - said the master of ceremonies, - hundreds of visitors have arrived, bought tickets so as to hear you sing, what are we going to tell them? All of them have come to say farewell to you, the most widely known poet of Germany. A huge crowd has gathered. The most popular TV channels of the world have aimed their cameras on you. You are a celebrity, not a common man, so that I could just say: he hasn't died yet, wait for him to die, and then come again. Next time when you die, no one will attend.

- I don't give a damn, I have a guest from Karabakh, it was he who at the time of the Soviets dared them and invited me to visit him.

Ben felt ease under his feet, slid up, caught up the poet's arms, pulled him up, took him out of the coffin lid harness lifting him up and away.

The people who witnessed the assention of Wolf, were crossing themselves and breaking up to go home.

Ben set course to South-West. Wolf was looking rapturously towards the horizon reciting political poetry continually. He was convinced that his German was being spread all over the world.

His father died in a Nazi concentration camp. Then he became a fanatical Communist, to take revenge on the Nazi, However soon he was disillusioned with the Communists, started criticizing them in his writings mocking the Socialist and

Communists ideas and ideologists, And soon became one of the leaders of the anti-socialist movement. Meanwhile, following the merging of the two Germanys and seeing Capitalism suppress all basic morals in the Socialist portion, he hated Capitalism and started to support the complaints of the Eastern side.

- What are you going to sing now, Wolf? - asked Ben.

-My thoughts are abandoning Germany, I am praising the Armenia of my dream, and I want to fight for Karabakh. If a great poet of England would die for Greece, why wouldn't a German poet die for Karabakh? Where are you taking me? What are those arrays of stone down below?

-Mighty stones, called Karahoonj, often compared with the Stonehenge. A culture seven millennia old.

-I have heard a similar thing, about the Egyptian pyramids and the Stonehenge, the same angular tilt... See, from here you can see an image of a huge bird.

-Yes, it is a vulture, the exact image of Cassiopeia constellation, - said Ben.

-Did you say vulture? That is what the old name of England is. Stonehenge, very curious...

-The heavy stones were pierced in thin places, to bind them with ropes and to pull them with oxen to the right place.

-How many stones?

They say it is three hundred and sixty-five. Like the days of the year. Every God's day the priests go in early morning to say good morning to the stone of that day. Each stone is positioned to face the dawn.

-That means they must be ritual stones. See, festive-day stones are different from others. Festive rituals at special days could be performed around certain stones. Curiously, nothing has been preserved.

There may be some references in manuscripts or mythology. However, these stones have one application.

- What is it?

-There are blizzards here in winter, the stone wall can serve as a screen against snow storms.

-What about the gaps between stones?

-The stone wall is made up of offshoots. In winter the animals were well protected here both from blizzards and from wolves.

-An Armenian scientist says these troughs show the ways to the stars.

-Oh, yes, the passes had been dug out with regard to the angular measurements of the pyramids and the Stonehenge.

-I approve the logic of that scientist, the flight of fancy, while you are too specific. Besides, there is a poetry in the idea of an observatory that is seven thousand years old.

-Wolf, allow me to call you a Wolf meaning the animal, rather than the name.

It is a good name.

-You are welcome.

I accept.

-The Anglo-Saxons, the Gauls, the Celts, the Normans, and other descendants of the Northern peoples in the countries of their ancestors today are apprehensive of the Armenian traces, they do not want to accept that they ruled five to six thousand years ago, and that it was them who erected the Stonehenge - Karahoonj, that the fragments of the culture that had reached them from the Orient, laid the foundation of civilization among the wild Northerners.

Have any traces remained of the cult-related or ritualistic procedures?

-Seven thousand years have passed since those stones with passages have been here, like a refuge with rocky covers. Now there is only a handful of people carrying this culture.

-You say it is a handful, but the impression is that it is sixty-four million.

-Be it as you say, let God hear your voice. It is not quite handy for the big countries that this little nation should have made a serious contribution to human civilization.

-Of course, they would like that the traces should have come from Old Egypt, Babylon or from the Greeks. I fully agree with you on that point. It would be nice to see that scientist of yours and to talk to him.

-I don't know him. The name is Boris Herooni.

-I know him, - said the German poet. -Where are you taking me, why have you turned back? I don't want to go to Europe.

-After being deprived of the GDR citizenship you were not any more needed by Europe.

- By the West, by NATO, by the USA, by the USSR, by the Warsaw Pact, by the MOSAD...

-Keep mum, poet.

-Don't drop me into the sea; I am not a good swimmer.

-It is not sea, only a lake, our Lake Sevan.

-My God, it is beautiful.

-We shall have a short rest on the Gulls' Island, there is no one there.

-Why?

-You will know when you see it.

The whole island was filled with birds. Ben and Wolf went down so carefully and stealthily, the birds never noticed them.

- I have never seen the like of it, - said the poet, - it is a miracle.

A group of gulls came and went through them. Wolf was surprised.

-Ben, Ben... see, I am dead.

-What happened, why do you keep your head so low?

-The gulls went through me.

-Don't keep them in your belly, they are not cooked.

-I am not joking. When they removed me from the cross, I was alive.

-It was your illusion.

-Am I dead now?

-Indeed, Wolf, I know nothing. Is it possible that we should be in some intermediate section?

- What of that?

- They will either take us back or take us away for good.

- Man, why didn't you let me die?

- You will have enough time.

-Now both the German papers and the people are gossiping about me.



- You will write a book on what you have seen, then they will go quiet.

- Got no pen or paper.

-Make a voice recording. I will give you a digital recorder.

A boat filled with people dropped anchor close to the island. Ben heard a familiar voice, grabbed the mast. He looked down. All spoke English. Among them were Ben's friends Gurgen and Artsrun, both deans from the University. Everybody gathered at the bow holding bunches of red roses in their hands. Women and girls started weeping. A stout young man in a straw hat turned over a sack dumping brown dust in the water. The bunches and wreathes of flowers were thrown in the water. Strangely enough, standing on the stern was B2 taking pictures of what was going on. Ben remembered that Gurgen offered him to join them, and with his friend Serj Papayants, with members of his family to take part in the burial of Serge's body. One third of the remains had been buried in Los Angeles, one third in the waters of Sevan, and one third will be taken to Berdzor for burial. B2 was taking pictures indefinitely. He was preparing a report for the "Philanthropist" paper. The funeral group gathered on the other side of the ship, with tables laden with food and drink, for funeral repast. B2 raised a glass filled with wine and said:

«Today is a happy day for Serge: he merged with the waters of Sevan, which had been his dream. Be informed that from now on the fishes of Sevan will carry a particle of Serge. Serge is creating a new tradition in the Armeniency, a new road to return to Homeland and to be saved. From now on thousands of Armenians will join the waters of Sevan, to be sanctified..."

- What ship is that, Ben? - asked Wolf.

Serge Papayants of Los Angeles has died. His relatives are ceding a part of his body to the Lake.

-What a beautiful way to be repatriated. The strength of the Armenians is just in the inextinguishable love for the Homeland, you have been upheld by this love.

-Another part of the body will be taken to Berdzor to be buried at a fountain monument.

A very beautiful cross-stone will be erected in Serge's memory.

- What is Serge's contribution to the Nation?
- He had built schools, planted trees...
- O.K., that will do, I am reciting a poem in his honor...

Sonorous, sharp German, seasoned with Serge, stirred by the waters of Sevan, communicated with Serge's particles and relics.

The ship started moving, and stopped facing the island. Thousands of alarmed gulls took wing filling the air. Someone with a camera got off to the shore and started taking pictures of the birds.

-See, Ben, the man taking pictures is very much like you. They call him "Benjamin" in your honor.

-He is Benjamin, Wolf.

- Is he, indeed?

-I haven't checked it. Don't know it myself.

-There is another Wolf who stayed in Germany. I would like to see him.

- If they haven't buried him yet.

- You are vicious.

- It is only my observation, nothing more.

- Then let me go, I will have to go back to Home Country.

- You are free, Wolf, they are waiting for you there.

-Ben, I would also like that a demon come inside me that I hover free like you, to follow my nose.

- How did you know there was a demon in me?

-Do you think I am blind?

-But I am not free, they take me wherever they want.

-It is not that bad. We shall meet again.

- Good trip, my friend.

## CHAPTER 9

### KOJGO

Ben felt a gaze fixed upon him. The gaze was burning. "Ashkhen", - was the thought. He looked for the beloved creature in the multitude. The next moment her breath was on him.

- You seem to be in a hurry.

-Yes, I must go with my daughter to talk to one next door to my workshop. He must give his consent to opening the door to street. An American woman putting on airs. Looking down on everyone. She is the boss of some American office.

I will come and see her. I know their language.

- No, my daughter Sona, she wants to speak herself.

- I am coming, too.

- Come.

- How will you present you daughter?

- No presentation, she will understand it.

-Won't she blame you

-No, said Ben sharply.

-Good. -Ringing to someone on the mobile, - please check, Arpi Vard, American, female, Loosik, are you sure, escaped from jail? Prior to that in the Sevan lunatic asylum? You have been very helpful. Thank you. Can you get a confirmation? Any traces of plastic operation? OK, the rest is on me. Don't worry.

-What is all that news about? - asked Ben.

-That woman...

-Rather, girl.

- The real name is Loosik.

-Loosik? The boss of the nuthouse gave that name, it seems. It is she, Ben, we have found her. She was next door to Anoosh in the nuthouse.

- We shall see her, you will look her in the eye.

-By Jove!

Close to the house they were approached by Sona.

-Father, who is this beauty?

-Sona, I can say nothing. In all cases, she is not an alien.

- I can see that.

-Sona, there are some more questions in connection with that woman.

-Don't make it worse, dad. What's done can't be undone.

-Don't worry.

- Shall I come?

-Come, you will have to make a call.

Sona pushed a button. A woman's voice was heard from the inside with a delay.

-I am sorry, I'm Ben's daughter.

-Ben? - the door opened half-way, a gaze was thrown at Sona, full of contempt, measuring her from head to foot, - you bored me with your semibasement, I refused to Ben.

-Excuse us, if we are so annoying...

Ashkhen came forward. Arpi was petrified. Ben saw her pupils widen.

-Anoosh...- pronounced Arpi, then went on in a trembling voice, - you...

- Yes, Loosik, it is me, I came from the other world, to see you, I am missing your sharp teeth.

-It is impossible... no, no, improbable, it is magic... if an agreement is needed, I don't mind, you can open any door... I am a citizen of the United States, representing a serious organization here... I will call up the Embassy now, they will protect me.

-Now your approval means nothing, no embassy will protect you, - remarked Ben unexpectedly from behind, - you must say, who had hired you to kill Anoosh.

-What Anoosh, there is no Anoosh that I know. But Anoosh is here.

-You know what I mean, - insisted Ben, - you have no way out, you will have to say it.

We have come from the other world just to make a judgment on you. Do you understand?

-Understand, - said the cannibalistic woman in a whisper that

could hardly be heard, but I need a proof.

-Your proof is Anoosh' presence, isn't it?

-Anoosh had a mole on her back, and one brow was injured...

-As if while eating you spared those signs, - said Ashkhen.

-At that place everything is repaired, - said Ben, please, know, we have been sent for a short time.

I can give the sign to the hairy creatures, so they will come and take you away.

-No, no, don't take me away, I am not guilty, they made me do it. I am only the hand.

-They made you eat a human being? What kind of appetite should you have to eat a living person in the raw? That is the only case in the history of civilization.

-If brother knows, you are lost.

No one has come off alive from his hand.

It is them who appoint the President, as well as the Government, and the deputies.

- Can you call him and inform about us?

-Not directly, but through somebody, it is possible. Ah, you have asked it, I am not to blame.

Arpi-Loosik contacted some "Gaji" on her mobile.

- Dear Gaj, it is me, Arpen, call the Boss urgently, tell him Ben and Anoosh are at my place...

-What Ben, what Anoosh...do you understand what you are saying?

-You call and say, he will know what to do, if you don't say, he will tear off your head.

- Well, well, I see...

After some time there was a call. Arphen answered it.

- On the phone...

-What happened, haven't I told you not to call for the stupid things?

- No, Kojgo, dear...

- I am not Kojgo, girl, I am Mr. Arkayan, did you understand, a pot of cabbage soup?

- Mr. Arkayan, Ben and Anoosh have appeared.

-Who is Anoosh?

- Your sister.

-But hadn't you eaten her? You said she was tasty, the two of them would taste even better. Ha, ha, ha...

-No, no, Mr. Kojgo, mm, Mr. Arkayan, sorry, they are at my home now.

- Where have they come from?

-They say from the other world.

- Well, roll along with them, I'll be coming to settle it. Listen, didn't you tell them about me?

-They said they knew. Very well, I'll do it, - turning to the visitors – he is coming. But it will be a bad lookout for you. You will see what it is like to die now.

-We shall be waiting downstairs in our semibasement, when Kojgo comes, you will let us know, - Arpi addressed Ben.

-When he comes, you will know at once.

-OK.

-Although he is my uncle, I have no idea, what kind of man he is, the so-called Kojgo.

- Better not to know, - said Ben, - he is a unique phenomenon, a bastard of this class may be born on Earth once in a hundred years.

-Maybe he is a genius?

-As a species, perhaps, a genius of evil. They usually do not hold any discussions. They rather do what first comes into their heads. For them, to murder someone is a simple matter.

-But they have inherited this feature from someone else, haven't they?

-There might be a few factors, including coincidental occurrences of extraterrestrial forces aimed at the intrauterine development.

-If he is so strong, then there is no chance to knock him down?

-The course of events will show.

-Are you relying on your intuition and hazard?

-Not exactly. I have studied them long. Your uncle is head of a Special Forces regiment. He controls the whole of the Army's

logistics.

- Maybe it's all a bubble, Ben, what do you say?

-I don't think so, - said Ben, - he is an avowed leader of murderers and felons. Everybody obeys him unquestioningly.

- They are like janissary?

-Almost. He has gathered the whole country in his handful. If it goes on, the state will collapse.

- Doesn't the President see the hazard?

-Kojgo keeps him tight in his chair. And the people fear Kojgo.

- Have you had an engagement with him?

They were expending the money belonging to the assistance foundation to the children of perished freedom fighters from the detachment of Vardkes from Los Angeles, so I provided explanations and conducted an interview in a paper about it. At that time the President wanted to nominate him Prime Minister, but then said that he had been criticized in a paper. To which he answered: "You are being criticized every day". The President said: "It was Ben who criticized you. He tried to make me write an article in his favor. I suggested to print an interview with him in the same paper titled "The Nation" He refused. I was persecuted, my crucial programming concerning the country's security were bungled. I was faced with new persecutions. They decided to eliminate me. I came to their den. They swerved.

-Fearing you?

-No, fearing people's anger. My articles had been spread. I enjoyed popular support. My series of articles on morality was universally approved. I was compelled to publish a new article. At some time he cooperated with the enemy. He made a secret agreement with the Baku leadership on the point of awarding self-governance to Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Movement decided to execute him as a traitor.

- How did he pull through?

-He had always been smart at getting out of situations like that. Now, too, the whole country is in the palm of his hand.

-My poor mother and her sister wanted to resist that monster.

-No, their only wish was to live and to protect themselves.

-He will gobble us now.

-No, he wants to see you. He is very wealthy now. He controls every movement in the country. He has created a terrible machine of a system. If whatever official is not a grafter, he has no place in the system. All assets are distributed by him alone.

- It is possible that he will be sorry for eliminating the sisters.

-As far as I know, brothers have always hated the sisters from early ages, and from infancy they made pilgrimages with twin brothers to kill twin sisters.

-Mother had told me nothing about it. It reminds of the struggle between good and evil.

-They went to school, didn't they?

-Their main school was the street, lessons by thief Palanga and jail.

Suddenly there were police cars' rattle in the courtyard followed by banging of doors and clanking of weapons.

-Maybe better not see them, said Ashkhen worriedly.

- Don't you want to see your uncle?

-If you want it, let us meet them, now resolutely and boldly said Ashkhen.

A little later Arpi called out:

-Ben, Mr. Arkayan is coming.

- Mr. Arkayan, who is he? ah, yes, of course, we are coming, - said Ben, - Sona, you will stay here, please.

At the door of Arpi's flat Ben and Ashkhen were stopped by tall soldiers who searched them.

-Boys, you look as if you were afraid of something, - said Ben.

-Why should we be afraid? - asked the officer.

-If you are not afraid, why should you frisk us?

-You came for a meeting, didn't you?

-We did.

-Then no unnecessary talk is needed. We are under orders.

Sitting at the top of a long table was a man of a stout constitution wearing the uniform of a general. Kojgo had never



had anything to do with the front line, save for a special looting battalion that he maintained in Karabakh. Woe to one who by mistake should take the lead ahead of Kojgo in the issue of looting.

-Come, come, you like to make the generals wait for you, - said Kojgo, eyeing Ashkhen with great attention, - do you at least know who you happen to deal with?

-We know, - answered Ben sharply.

-You look surprisingly similar to my twin sisters.

Ashkhen's face showed a shadow of an amused smile.

-Whose daughter are you, perhaps Ashkhen's?

- I am Anoosh, - said Ashkhen.

- But...

- Anoosh has been eaten..., - said Ashkhen deliberately looking towards Arpi, - half-eaten..

-I have inquired into the fate of my sick sister, - said Kojgo, - it was very tragic. C'est la vie...

-I have come to restore justice.

-Where have you come from, who has sent you?

-From the other world.

- Tell your tales to your grandmother, -said Kojgo, - you will answer for every bit of lies.

Ashkhen rose from her seat, slid close to the general, passing through him with a moment's delay. The general winced, yelled with pain. He bleached and became the color of a white cloth. Hearing the commander's growling, the soldiers came in.

-Shall we take them away, -asked the lieutenant.

-No, not yet, wait outside.

Ashkhen appeared and seated herself close to Ben quietly.

For a long time Kojgo who had inspired horror to the whole country, could not come to himself from fear.

-It is us who gives the orders here, -said Ben, - you must know, the day of judgment has come, you will answer for all your misdeeds.

Kojgo disregarded Ben's words, mumbled something unintelligible at him and turned back to Ashkhen.

-I don't know about your capabilities, my sister, if I made mistakes, pardon me, let my sins be compensated. I am very rich, I can cover you with gold from head to foot, give you your and your sister's due in your inheritance a hundredfold.

-You don't understand that I need nothing. You dispatched that beast to devour your sister, who only wanted to receive what was due to her by the law.

-I was too young and stupid. Or else, money was very much needed at that time, to start it big, while you did not understand, didn't want to understand me. Well, what is done can't be undone. Let us put up, my hands are free, I can do whatever I like, and I have no children. Let me bequeath all my property to you. I possess property in Spain and America. Only in Swiss banks I have two billion.

-That's why I wonder why Armenia remains poor.

-If I don't loot, another one will do it. It is a nation of sheep, they need a strong shepherd lest they should be eaten by wolves.

-No, Kojgo, it is you who are the beast, you must be cleared off from the country, - said Ben, - you must go to hell.

-I have built a huge church for my money, every day the priest starts the daily mess with my name and in my honor. The Bishop said that my place in paradise is secured.

-The soul of that priest is already in hell, - said Ben.

- But he is still alive.

- The body lives, but the soul not.

-So, the church which is the House of God, is meaningless for God?

- It is.

- My name and my donation has been written on the wall of the church.

-God knows everything. How many people have you tortured, you put the whole country on the edge of devastation through the plague of your immorality.

-God wanted to save the Armenian Republic, - exclaimed Kojgo, - and went on, - then he could have seized my hand in time, cut up my tongue, lest all those crimes should not have

been perpetrated. HE did not seize it, and I thought that He stipulated, that it was good for him. And now I believe that I have acted within His will. So, it is you who will be punished by God. Now I am leaving, in fifteen minutes I will have to meet the President.

We shall continue our conversation tomorrow.

-Kojgo pressed a secret button, and the soldiers poured in, Kojgo ordered, - without too much noise please, follow my soldiers, they will answer me for you with their heads.

-We shall come to see you tomorrow, -tried to assure him Ben.

-No, I don't trust you, - said the General, - you will be taken to some place where you will stay securely. You now have too many enemies. I am now responsible for you even before God. I will return you wholly, as you are, in the most solemn way.

-If you think of detaining us, then you can hardly do it.

-Listen, you bastard, the man who I am going to visit now is in horror: I am going to loot him, have not yet decided whether to bury him or just to cut off his great toe.

There was a time when there was finger cutting, starting from great toes and thumbs, they peeled a man like that. You understand who I am? This earth has a few masters. I am the master of this portion.

-You got lost, you wretch, - said Ben, then he went out of Arpeni's flat, holding Ashkhen by the hand. However, they could not find Sona in the workshop.

-If you are looking for your daughter, don't worry, she has returned home safely, - muttered the officer under his nose with a giggle.

-Clearly, one could not learn too much from the American action films.

-Ben, I am going to Sona right away, suggested Ashkhen:

-I understand you, Ashkhen, - said Ben. They are kidnappers. You do and keep me informed. Remember, they will have to answer before the law. Society must learn to respect the law, from the President to the scavenger.

- But they can inflict injury upon Sona's children.

- Why?

-He is a very dangerous person and nothing will stop him. If Kojgo learns about our requirement to sanction him... no, I am afraid. You want to appeal to the President of the Country?

-I don't know, I applied several times, but he never received me. He simply does not like the spirits.

-Do the spirits like him?

- Had there be anything to love, we would have come to this. There was a call on Ben's mobile phone.

-Ben, listen to what I say, - Ben recognized Kojgo's cold and metallic voice, - I just heard your daughter and kids were kidnapped. I can assure you those are people that are not under my command.

- Aren't they your subordinates?

-Subordinated to me, yes, but acting autonomously, I have no right to meddle into their programs. I will try to intervene to let the children go free, but nothing can be warranted. I only warned them that not a single hair should fall from their heads, or they will be dispatched.

- Who will be dispatched?

- Kidnappers... Ben.

Ben heard Kojgo gnash his teeth.

- I don't believe you.

- That is your business.

-Where are you talking from?

-Search me. When I reach destination, call you to come.

- OK. I am coming.

- No, Ben

. As it is so often the case, Ben left the issue of location to his inner creature, for he had already been convinced that there was no difficulty for it to find a specific person, and to do with him whatever Ben liked. Only with his son his inner creature lingered by some unknown reason, showing no customary intuition.

- Where are we going, Ben, - asked Ashkhen.

- To the President.

-But we had to see Kojgo, and President will not receive us.

- Now it is us who is giving orders.
- Are you sure Kojgo will not injure the kids?
- He is worried about his own security, rather than about the children.

Ben thought that first of all it remained to find out whether there is a demon inside the President. If so, that will put them on an equal footing, and there is going to be a severe fight between them. It seems from the President's actions that a successful devil did not enter inside him, or else, the devil did not choose a successful presidential candidate. If it becomes clear that inside him there is no devil at all, then it may be even easier. What if he is the devil himself... You know that people often mention him as "Satan's breed". Perhaps there is something true in him. Anyway, he never met him at assemblies. Ben helped him twice to be elected President. The reason was his rivals who were both times from Artsakh. One rival was a close friend and even a henchman of the Country's President, he could have easily ceded the area for a certain sum of money, the next one was his son who did not care a damn about that locality. During the election he was the best among the worst. But when a mob boss' henchman pops up and bring up the country to the edge of abyss, then no one would have any doubts. He was first blinded by Kojgo's expensive gifts, then big lumps of money. Then opening up an extensively profitable business for his son gradually put the President into shackles. Later Kojgo obliged the supervisory bodies to allocate a portion of their gains to the President. In this way the President and the country's system of governance gradually plunged into the vice of corruption. Meanwhile, the President thought that corruption and bribery belonged to the system of governance without hindering the country's progress. Once he said that corruption and bribery generated peculiar relationships within the elite by laminating it, which would have been impossible by simply distributing ranks and positions.

Ashkhen and Ben entered the reception room unnoticed.

Ben somehow could not manage to regain control of the process, i.e. to show up when he wanted and to go invisible at

other times. True, it had never happened that the change would not take place when it had been really needed. If it was needed to pass through some person, it happened immediately. Just his inner creature would terminate its desire and do what is in his thoughts. There have been transformations against his will. At first it was insulting for Ben. But he gradually put up with it. He came to accept that not all that is inside him is his own. His was only what was human, but he could not manage what was outside of what was human.

Waiting in the reception room to be invited to the President were chairmen of police, communications and transport, heads of customs and state security services, and the Mayor. They were trying not to speak to one another. There was only exchange of glances, that were very highly charged. No need to talk. Everything is clear. Everyone knew the measure of tax laid on him. The Mayor was the one who came in.

Mayor, having no suspicion that any stranger might be in the office, came quietly behind the desk, rapidly squeezed a parcel into the drawer, closed it with a habitual gesture, and placed himself on the sofa. The President said:

- How is it going, that so-called Benjamin, haven't you driven him out of the "Shooshee" Foundation?

-We have granted him membership of the trusteeship committee, - answered the Mayor in a guilty tone.

- How is that?

- Suggested by Zorro.

-You are making wrong steps. One day he will expose everything and write. Have you read his new article? Touching you, too. A funny writer, that son of a bitch. A couple of papers like that will open all mouths wide.

-We might...- the Mayor turned his hand around his neck and then jerked it up.

-Oh, no, I think the matter has not yet come to that, ha, ha, ha! – and the room was filled with the giggle like that of a clockwork puppet.

The manager of our Foundation is an experienced guy, he has been engaged in espionage in different countries, he is keeping Benjamin's tail always well-trimmed.

-Be careful, his blow is unavoidable, I cannot help, if anything.

-We can eliminate him any time we wish, said the Mayor calmly, I have discussed the matter with Kojgo.

-Our comrades from Special Services talk about his satanic connections.

-Those are deliberately spread to scare us.

- Who spreads?

- Secret services.

- Speed up this process through Kojgo.

- I will do my best.

-Be careful, lest the people know. Once we had to cede to public opinion.

-I have heard something. There was a special decision to eliminate him, wasn't there?

-Yes, he had to be sent to the Shooshee jail, they would resolve the issue, but it wasn't realized. The people could wipe out in a matter of hours, both our independence and our victory.

-Because of this miserable writer?

-Don't you know our people? They need to find a hero.

-But you never included him in the commendation list, have you?

-That would be too thick. Every time his name is removed from the list. If we make him a hero, he will show us the hell.

- Whether you give it or not, the result is the same.

-Well, I'll...- the President pressed a button and asked, - where is the tax chief?

-He hasn't come, Mr. President.

-Hasn't come? Tell him to come no more.

- They say there was an accident.

- Did he fall down and break his leg?

- No, there is a problem with one of his workers.

- What kind?

- He was taken hostage.

- Who did it?
- Kojgo's guys.
- Well, I'll see about it. Kojgo didn't call? He has to come, hasn't he?
- Yes, had to come... but he called and said he had an urgent matter and would not come.
- Why didn't you report at once?
- Couldn't make it, Mr. President. A lot of people waiting here.
- OK, I see. Addressing the Mayor: you hurry up with resurfacing the streets, everything is in ruins.
- I demolished it so as to make it up all at once in a month's time.
- Oh, yes, it has to be done, well, go, you have lots of things to do.

Ben put his hand on President's shoulder.

- Hi, Boro.- said Ben.

The President shuddered. A few years before, in the restaurant "Sorrel" he was greeted in the same way by one Poghos. The President treated his guests at that place in order to show that he was democratic. The President's bodyguard beat and murdered the one who said "Hi" in the restaurant rest room. The judge acquitted the bodyguard by President's instruction. Ben attended the court proceedings with the witnesses. That case dealt a major blow to the President's image.

However, the President does not care too much about his International image. He always achieved what he wanted with brutal force. The number of votes cast at the Presidential election was immaterial. He thus kept "winning" the elections and sitting in his armchair, shaking with laughter at the world.

Ben understood that President had no Satan inside, no force had come into his body, otherwise he would have felt his presence and that of Ashkhen at once. So, there will be no hard or unyielding struggle. His only strength was perfidy, as well as Kojgo. In the meantime those were his weak points, since perfidy will expand the army of complainers and enemies, while being in the same team with Kojgo will result in defeat. Being



outside the society's supervision will in turn weaken both the state and the President. Thus, the sooner they dump that scarecrow, the better.

Ben thought that in the office of the Country's President he was invisible. However, he now wanted to become visible and tangible. It was only from the scared look of the President that he guessed that he started to see him. Before his eyes first Ben, then Ashkhen appeared from nowhere.

- Benjamin, you, why, are my bodyguards asleep?

Ben again put his heavy hand on President's shoulder.

- I don't understand what is going on, mumbled the President.

He managed only to press the alarm button. The guard force soldiers burst in noisily to wait for the President's order in a combat-ready position. The President pointed his finger at Ben, however they again disappeared from view, and the soldiers were eyeing one another irresolutely. The President felt the cause of misunderstanding and addressed the soldiers:

- You will excuse me, I touched the button unintentionally.

The bodyguards, content that nothing happened, laughed and cleared the office. Ben and Ashkhen again showed up before the President.

- You could have applied beforehand, Ben, can it be so that I don't receive you, - said the Country's President.

- I tried several times, each time you rejected, - said Ben, - but now the problem is more complicated, since in the middle of it is Kojo.

-In this case I can do nothing to help. I just thought so, that you would pop up one day, to take revenge on me, said the President.

-You have put up a few hurdles on my way, so many times you hinder my movements. However they are part of the people's movements.

-You ascribe everything to me.

-Your henchmen seeing your tension towards me, also build hurdles. You have an enlarged view of your

- It depends on how it can be viewed, - said the Country's President, - for so many years I maintain peace in the region.

-The previous President says that it was during his Presidency that the Country won the war.

- He is right.

- If not for him as the President, our Victory would have been more significant.

- That is...

We could have opened the second front and the Aggressor's country would be turned into a confederation of six subject states, thus eliminating whatever threat from the East for good.

-You think America is asleep?

-In cases like this what matters is the fait accompli. Americans themselves do it this way.

- Your view of the situation is narrow, while my predecessor had a wider view.

-He could not have a wide view, he never looked, - said Ben, - he was executing a mission.

-Whose mission? -Ben fell silent trying to change the subject. -I don't know, Ben, I am in possession of other data. Blocking the opening of the second front is blamed by the secret services on you.

-I had never cooperated with them. In the airport of Makhachkala they tried to hand me over to the local police.

-Unfortunately, it failed, - said the President, - but we have to learn from our mistakes.

-All the same, the past will never return for you.

-Why do you think so?

-Vanity and mania grandiose in you is the highest of all.

- That is a wrong view of myself.

-Only a haughty man can say before an audience of fifty thousand people at a meeting: "Where is the man who could come up against me?" You have never been elected by the people. Your henchmen who could retain their position only if you become president, filled the ballots in heaps, while the election commission chairman eventually wrote down the number that would do the job for you.

-Who has made him do it, let him not fill them in heaps. It was sanctioned by the people. Our Republic has not yet achieved a level to get the true bearings at elections. You have seen it yourself, that their vote was given to my adversary.

-Thieves and gangsters, corruptionists were happy to have you as President.

- I have been chosen by the elite.

-You have been chosen by the dregs.

- One example?

- Kojgo.

The President fell silent.

-He has made you President, it is true. Now he thinks that he will make another President.

- How do you know?

- I met him today.

-He must be here any moment. He will appear by all means. If you have anything to say to him, do say and you will get an answer.- said the President and laughed, - ha, ha, ha...

-I know, - said Ben, - however the matter is that you must decide, if you want to get rid of Kojgo.

-I ignore how to do it. If you know, do whatever your mind tells you to do. But you must know: Kojgo is very cautious and arrogant, stepping over the borders of any inhumanity. He is simply a monster.

-Kojgo is not alone, you are one cell of his created system. Without Kojgo you are inexistent.

-But without Kojgo the Presidency will survive, won't it?

-He can become the Prime Minister and eliminate the Presidency altogether, as the case was with Vazgen once.

- The public willing.

- You have never given a damn about the public or their opinion.

"Guarantee of Security". Perhaps morality will be still wanted in a hundred years. This subject now is quite irrelevant. You are pushing the society towards complaining and busting the fundamentals of statehood.

-Your formulated rules are rotten, since they have been built on immorality.

-You come and sit at my place, and establish the basics of morality. I will see Kojgo come and cut your throat, what is your response?

- He has taken hostage my daughter's children.

-You won't get them back, - said the President indifferently, as if it was an ordinary case.

-Ashkhen, you stay here, I am going to free Sona's children. What this one says is right. I'll be back soon.

Ben left them to the care of the devil and immediately emerged in a huge production facility of a deserted factory. After the collapse of the Soviet regime the new authorities, to eliminate all traces of socialism, shut down all production units, sold them to their Parteigenosse at symbolic prices, with an obligation that they should be demolished and closely and cooperatively connected with Russia and other USSR republics as well as the production of the country as a whole. Thus, the giant manufacturing facilities forming part of the big country's production system became extinct.

Looking around, Ben sorted out that he was at one of the production plants of the city of Lusavan.

In a corner at the foundry section mother was fastened to a steel structure in front of the children. Kojgo put a knife to Sona's throat demanding her to contact her father with her cellular phone to have him do what he wanted, otherwise they would all be dead. While Sona pleaded not to kill her before the eyes of her children.

Ben approached unnoticed, took hold of Kojgo's hand.

-Kojgo, let the girl go, I tell you, let her go. Talk to me.

There was a ring on Kojgo's phone. With his trembling free hand Kojgo took out his phone from its case.

-Bor, it is you, said Kojgo, following Ben with his gaze, - your voice is not too good. Are you calling on account of Ben's grandchildren? Ah, so, that is how my sister got you? No, I'll kill them, but not yield to this scarecrow. Listen, Boris, you can

regard your song as sung. In the morning you won't be President any more.

-Kojgo relaxed his hold, took his hand aside. However Ben held fast. The knife fell down. -It is going to be Ben. He is more popular than you. Of course, I know, and I will decide. You will go nowhere and make no announcements. The coup is over. then, addressing the already visualized Ben, - Ben, swear that you will fulfill my request.

-If you think you can make one President, you are wrong, said Ben. You host this country no more.

Kojgo's hands became sort of chained.

- OK, Ben, you win, - said Kojgo, - but I got an offer to you, let us declare you President of the country.

-Are you staging a coup?

-Yes, you will run a great country.

-First of all, it isn't great.

-With the Diaspora, it is great, strewn all over the world.

-I am trying to resolve other issues, nobody is going to let me become President of Armenia.

-Address your leadership, they will agree. This country needs to have a leader.

-This nation needs to be freed from yoke, to be rehabilitated to moral values.

-I agree. I will do what you want. I have huge levers. Any order will be fulfilled at a moment's notice. I see now that a weak President will weaken the country.

-What do you want?

- I have everything, dear brother, I will stay as I am, I am quite content.

- Have you finished, Kojgo? from now on you are no more.

-Wait, wait, well, it was a folly, I did it, from now on I will only serve you, what difference is it to me, who the President is?

- You are no more, Kojgo...-said Ben.

-Well, now see what I do to you, said Kojgo and shouted, - boys, kill them all!

No one moved. Kojgo aimed a weapon at one of his soldiers and fired. The soldier fell down. A stout bodyguard who Ben had

met at the court of law aimed a pistol at Kojgo and fired. Kojgo was pushed back and fell down.

- We shall get your daughter home with her children, - said the bodyguard, don't worry.

- Keep away from the children, - pulled him up Ben.

The soldiers were pushed back by an unknown force. Ben meanwhile tried to locate Kojgo, however he had been saved by a bullet-proof jacket and managed to escape.

Ashkhen came up and they left the factory with the freed hostages. Ashkhen got some vehicle, they got in and in half-an-hour's time were at Sona's house. The apartment was all topsy-turvy.

-Let us take Sona and kids to another place, until everything settles down, suggested Ashkhen. Kojgo will not put up with his defeat.

-He will not, - said Ben, - We take them to Tsakhkadzor, the House of Writers. I will talk to the President tomorrow.

- What president? - asked Ashkhen apprehensively.

- The President of the Writers' Union.

-What if he is of the Zeds, too? So much the better, tell no one. We must talk to Movses, the manager of the Writers' House.

- Right, - said Ben.

Having accommodated Sona and children, Ben and Ashkhen slid off the frame of the Writers' House and climbed a forest-covered slope.

## CHAPTER 10

### BK-3

-Where are we going, it seems, this territory has been privatized, it doesn't belong to the devilry any more, - said Ashkhen.

-Let us not think about it, but rather dedicate ourselves to reason, - said Ben, all the more so that it is the time to make decisions on the fate of the country.

- Or shall we give ourselves to Satan?  
-Do you think that Satan and reason are identical?  
- It is the same, whether it is identical or not.  
-We go to Shooshee first, I promised to Arshavir, a ghost from Shooshee, to find incense for his son.

Do you know the place?

-Of course. They must have already seen each other in Shooshee.

- There is the issue with Hovannes that is left, but some inner voice tells me to remain alert.

-What if the inner voice is cheating?

-My inner voice, dear Ashkhen, is Satan that is inside me. I decide nothing.

-Even in my own case.

-We have spoken about that.

-OK. Let's move.

Ben and Ashkhen, hand-in hand, slid over mountains, valleys, passed Hunot Gorge, touching down at the gate of Aslan's summer house. There was a strange animation in the yard of the summer house. They entered unnoticed. Benjamin arrived accompanied by students who were moving around here and there, like ants around an anthill. In a small pavilion covered with green plants the students were seen romping around. Others were laying the table for supper directed by the cook. And so, Benjamin was persistently implementing his previously designed program. His idea was that the young people ignore their country. As he declared on the TV, they have no links with the remote parts of the country, Artsakh in particular. If the Turk attacks tomorrow, they will not come to defend their Motherland.

Benjamin was arguing with Aslan.

-I will not allow that Avan's cave "40 degrees" should be accessed by inexperienced students, said Aslan, - I am a mountain climber, it is a difficult terrain, if something happens, it will be hell.

-Aslan, I have brought students to be photographed here. In this way the idea of our expedition tent camp will be busted.

A few years before Ben had climbed 40-degree cliffs. Of course, this title was conditional, since seeking a degree among the cliffs does not make too much sense. And if your foot slips, you will go down into the precipice.

-If you want to know the truth, there are ghosts here, - said Aslan, thinking that would hold Ben back from going into the cave.

-You have told me that. That has nothing to do with the situation. Besides, his Grace has exorcised them all.

- No, Ben, I have seen signs.

-If the students know, all will escape.

-OK, they will not be told. But the ghosts may come tomorrow with you and push the students into the precipice. I don't know what they intend to do.

-Do whatever you like with your ghosts, Aslan, we are going to the cave in the morning, - cut him off Benjamin, - "40 degrees" is exactly what is an emergency situation. And please, know, that there is no achievement without risks.

-You know better, Ben, - yielded Aslan.

Ben decided to accompany the students with Ashkhen, to support them.

In the morning Ashot, manager of the Museum, came to keep company with the students. They spotted the ghost of Artashes with his wife and children at a cliff top. They seemed to be expecting the students as well. The ghost encountered Ben and Ashkhen with a smile.

-Artashes, - said Ben to the ghost, - have you come to breathe the fresh air of the gorge?

-You know, Ben, that ghosts do not breathe, - answered Artashes, - we heard the dispute between Benjamin and Aslan, and decided to help the students descend safely. If we don't do that at least five persons will tumble into the precipice.

-And Aslan...

-Aslan still blames us, he doesn't understand that he had seized our home, demolished our burial place.

-Artashes, I promise you that Aslan will erect a tombstone in memory of your family.



-Shall I say the text of the epitaph?

-No, Artashes, I am smart at those things, I know by heart all Shooshee gravestones.

-My surname is Yavriants, the tribal name is Chilingarants. Will you remember?

-Ashkhen will.

-Well, if you look after the students, we can go. Be careful with the Kayak girl.

Oh, yes, she has a fear of high places.

-You will also look after that big-headed tall boy. He decided to push down Mesrop, the student leader and his adversary. Meanwhile, another tall student and his girlfriend are planning to make love in the cave.

-Yeh, they want to create a caveman.

- Don't hinder, let them try.

-OK, Artashes, I will do what I said. I have tried it, no Neanderthal has been born.

-Try again, it is needed.

-Why?

-Not for me, for the civilization. So that people should remember their past. Well, Ben, I have also come to thank you for the incense for Arshavir.

- Direct your thanks to Ashkhen.

-Oh, Ashkhen, I am very grateful to you. I will soon depart, hope to tell your mother about your loving attitude.

-Good Lord...- pronounced Ashkhen, deeply touched.

-Ben, now the climb is not any more hazardous for the students. When they reach the cave and go back, we shall celebrate the Ascension together.

-OK, Arshavir, we'll be back in two hours.

Some students appeared who descended by a path. The ghosts came stumbling in opposite direction passing through them. The student tourists felt nothing. Or perhaps they had some strange feeling, but did not understand what it was. The tourists admired the view of a deep gorge before their eyes. When a dangerous descent started, Ashkhen, like a Guardian

Angel, was overlooking the blue-eyed girl, while Ben was never farther than one step from the big-headed youth. One moment one of the girls slipped. Ben rushed to help her, at the same time seeing that Mesrop was sliding towards a crevice. He made it in time to stop him. Looking up, he saw the huge-headed youth laughing and looking insolently, as if sending a challenge to Ben. Ben understood that he had been dispatched by the Zeds to put up hurdles in front of Ben, as well as to spy. And probably he knew that Ben would save Mesrop. Meanwhile, Benjamin was using the camera to record the most interesting moments. Ben noticed that he recorded Mesrop to slide down and to get saved. When little remained to reach the cave, Ben and Ashkhen hurried to be the first to enter the cave. If at first glance at the cliffs it seems that it was impossible to approach the caves, however, when you are there, you can see that at the time of powerful geological movements the stone layers were mutually displaced leaving places for paths that can be accessed by people. In old times those caves were used by people seeking refuge. On platforms outside the caves were traces of structures and fences. Troop commander Avan built a fortress here in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Close to the entrance of the cave was a round tower with loopholes. Ben already saw a brutal battle between the forty-thousand Turkish army and the forces of Avan that ended in the Armenian victory. Ben and Ashkhen entered through a huge opening in the cave. Water from the ceiling was dropping into a hollow cliff. The cave is named Batshit Cave by the local folks. Indeed, Ben noticed that the whole floor of the cave was littered by dry droppings that were used by the local population as fertilizer.

When the students reached their destination in safety, Ben and Ashkhen hurried towards Shooshee.

Happy screams could be heard from the yard of Aslan's summer house.

-Ben, - said Ashkhen, - it seems that the ghosts are marking the fest of Ascension.

- It happens, doesn't it, on the fortieth day after the Easter.

-Yes, tomorrow is Thursday. See, they gathered flowers and are sitting and singing, while making wreaths. Neither have they forgotten about the seven water lilies.

-They replaced the lilies by an array of pails removed from the wells, said Ben.

Ben and Ashkhen entered quietly and sat down under an old willow tree.

The ghosts, as if paying no heed to the visitors, wound up a new song.

*Ben sat under the tree,*

*Dear hey, dear ho.*

*His beloved is at hand,*

*Dear Ashkhen, dear ho.*

The spirits cast some things into the pails filled with water. Ashkhen in her turn removed her ear-rings and threw them into the pail.

-When throwing lot, you must say a ditty, said Ashkhen to Ben.

-When I was a little boy, I knew a few ditties that I learned from my aunt, - said Ben, - let me remember some.

Boys and girls, decorated with wreaths of flowers, were clutched in a round dance around incense-Arshavir and father Artashes. Father tossed up his younger son in the air, while the children exclaimed with every toss and sang old Armenian songs unknown to Ben and Ashkhen.

*Hang-bang hang none,*

*Make porridge – oil none,*

*Hang-bang into well,*

*No take-out of well.*

*Give rope to take out,*

*Give rope to add rope*

*Give oil to the rope,*

*Put egg on the palm.*

They hung flowers on the house columns, then coming back to the courtyard, started to sing in turns the Shooshee original ditties.

*It is Ascension today,*

*Glory to God, Glory to God,  
Christ is gone to heaven.  
All fortunes open.*

Our horse has a mane of gold,  
Hoi-hoi, what is new,  
Shooshee fort is virgins' trinkets,  
All diamonds and gold.

A girl called Mariam raises her hand, removes an object from  
a pail, returns it to its master saying:

-A song is your lot.

*A ditty will follow.*

*Many pinks in the orchard,  
Eyes, flickering in water,  
Let my young bird come,  
Despite the ones who sing.  
It is Ashkhen's turn now.*

Ben, you have promised, haven't you? Ben crossed himself  
and sang in a husky voice:

-I went to Church Ghazanchezoz  
to see the Stoup with jewels.

It was a crazy deed.

Twelve braids upon the back.

The house is to the brim,

I go inside, I go in,

And see what it is like.

Your breast will taste of melon.

An unrestrained giggle spread over the yard, so that the  
house windows jingled. Ashkhen, with eyes wet from feeling,  
came up and kissed Ben. A ghost named Anahit cut off the  
giggle with a melodic and sonorous voice.

*Her name is Mariam.*

*The ornament is blessing.*

*The fortress burned,*

*And it will never cool.*

She took a decoration from the pail and handed it to Mariam.

*The latter refused, saying*

*Our fortress of Shooshee,*

*The incense goes forth,  
The place is all in shambles,  
The heart is in the dark.*

-Ben, it is impossible to do the video recording, said Ashkhen.

-Unfortunately, the modern video recording cameras can only register material things, while the spirits are outside the video camera's video field, answered Ben.

-We are losing the culture gathered and polished in thousands of years.

-The consecutive massacres and genocide have annihilated the millennia of culture.

- Therefore we had no right to be weak, said Ashkhen.

-The same culture could also become a basis for consolidating the state.

- How?

- Maybe even through injection of moral and spiritual values.

A mother of ghost children sang:

*War happened  
Bread is dear,  
Hoi, you poor,  
Ah, the fort is all alone.*

Seeing that the ditties developed a gloomy mood, Ben and Ashkhen took their leave in silence, intending to ask Aslan to put up with the presence of ghosts without harassing them.

Looking around, Ben found a familiar environment. He had been there. It was a road to Diutakan. Ben and Ashkhen met two ghosts, by whose attires they thought one was a clergyman, the other one a noble.

-Greetings to you, - said Ben, nodding his head.

-God be kind to you, strangers, - answered the clergyman, - you seem to be coming from far-away worlds.

-Yes, from remote times, Holy Father.

-The changes of time is the will of God, my son.

-I am Ben, my companion is Ashkhen, introduced himself Ben, being sure that they were looking at people of 1500 years before, and thinking at the same time that it could be a good

case for movie or theatrical production, - we have come to your world by the will of God.

-A guest of God is our guest, - said the noble, - for our good-hearted King Vachakan a God's guest is first and foremost his guest. The King sent us to welcome you and to invite you to the Aghve Constitutional Assembly. Please, join our pilgrimage. I am Bakoor, Governor of Kaghankatooik.

- The Court Priest, yours, truly.

- Is the Court of Diutakan fit for such an Assembly?

-No, in Aghve there is the King's big summer palace, where each time the Assembly gathers from all corners of the country the spiritual and secular leaders, explained Governor Bakoor. This time we are going to adopt new rules and laws for the country. Disputes and controversies often arise among different secular people and those of clergy, bishops, priests, nobles and the military. Our King wanted to convene a large assembly in Aghve, in order to establish a regular Constitution.

-The assembly of Aghve is a festival for all of us, therefore, headed by Big Grigor, Doctor Pandalion, Zakare, Grigoris, Hripsime, Gayane, and by the relics of other Saints, we start our pilgrimage to Aghve.

-Is it far away from this place? - asked Ashkhen.

-There is no far or near in a pilgrimage, - answered the Prince.

And the priest added: -People walk as far as Jerusalem, no one saying whether it is far or near, anyway, the pilgrims' procession.

They were walking on the path going down into the gorge. Meanwhile the gorge was filled in milk-colored clouds. After some time everything was sunk in massive fog.

A sound of spiritual songs comes on the side of Jraber, then mixing with the noise of the Trtuakan waters, sometimes dampened in the forests, but at other times it could divorce itself from the whispers of the river and go clean, to be reflected from the cliffs and reach Ben and Ashkhen. Coming out of the all-white world, they sat down to take breath and to shake down the fog-induced tension. Floating out of the mist was the first cart,

youngdeacons walking in its front, banners in hands crossing one another and singing. They were followed by a detachment of mounted soldiers armed with spears, swords and bows and arrows. Behind a mounted man holding a bridle going at a trot were a steed loaded with a deer and two bores.

-It is the King's yesterday's hunting bag, - said Governor Bakoor, - he went hunting to stand a treat to the participants of the Assembly.

Other carts came into view.

-The first cart carries the relics of the blessed, - said the priest.

The cart was covered with dark red skins, well emphasized against the white lining. The gold cross was ornamented with precious stones. On the church banner Ben read a legend "King Vachakan". The cart was pulled by four horses with tails painted red, with wreathes on the heads. On the cart, besides vases with relics there was a big Gospel, wreathes with precious stones and silver inlay, as well as other books. Walking at the sides of the cart and behind were numerous priests, monks, readers, psalmists.

-The next one is the cart of our beloved Queen Shushanik, - said Governor Bakoor.

Sitting in the cart was the Queen with a group of women. At the side of the cart Ben noticed a soldier with quiver and arrow sitting on a red steed: Ben recognized King Vachakan with difficulty, since he had never seen him in this attire. The horse was adorned with rose-colored bunches of cloth, while tied up on the neck were silver bells that jingled with each movement of the horse's mane. The lower part of the neck was adorned with colored beads with a big round talisman hanging on the breast.

Our God-loving and righteous King had had no children for a long time, said the priest, - the monks, the priests and the bishops prayed to God to award them a male child. Our human-loving God, who is the supplier of all good things, hearing our prayers, awarded a Pandalion who had fought for Christ. Eventually, the road is ended, from the river rustling in the gorge

going left, taking direction towards a small village on a plane valley descending from the mountain Mrav.

-Doni Estate, - said the Patriarch of Kaghankatooik.

Doni Estate, - repeated Ben, - that is the estate of the river or water:

-The village had been divided into three parts, - said Bakoor the Patriarch, - the first one was the land Ketikumer on the shore of the river Trtu. The next part, called Estate, spread on the mountain dale descending from Mrav. The third part was down below and was called Artoona Kumer.

Does "Kumer" have the meaning of "a cowshed"?

Yes and no. Old people say that "Kumer" is in the first place a tribal name.

The Vachakans also confirm that. There was an old belligerent tribe that was located in the Trtu valley, and the villages carried its name. And they built houses underground, connected by trenches.

-What has become of those people?

-One branch was mixed with the Armenians, and now is ruling in the land of Caucasus Albania.

Not reaching the village, the procession stopped. The King sat down on a stump. The heavy clouds over Trtu Gorge, as if ceding to the ground their damp weight, started going up the dale, towards the wrinkled summit of Mrav, yielding the room to the sun rays

-The King made a sign for us to approach, - said the Court Priest.

Vachakan, who was a tall and able-bodied young man, one could see a hard muscular body under the apparel, a mighty figure, setting straight the golden handle of his sword, got up from his place, came across to meet the visitors. His face, tanned under the Artsakh sun, suggested that Vachakan was not the guy who had grown up under his mother's skirt, but had been raised in the wars against the Northern looters, had been hardened in the unyielding struggle against the pagan demons in the name of the Christian Faith. Ashkhen, seeing the



approaching King, assumed a shy posture of a medieval woman and walked towards the group surrounding the Queen.

-Your clothes show that you are strangers coming from distant places, - said Vachakan.

-Perhaps the place is not distant, but the difference in time is great.

- The difference in time?

-Yes, fifteen hundred years.

-It is for us a difficult matter, however, the timing set by God is inscrutable. The messenger of God is the light of our eyes. Welcome to you in the world of South-East Armenia.

-Addressing the butler,- be quick, lay the tables for supper.

The guests must be hungry. But first we will drink a glass of wine. This has been made of the Muscat grapes that I have grown in the orchard. The wine of Jraberd is magic water of immortality.

At the side of the Royal table they laid two large silver tables with abundant snacks. The King invited all the people and attendants to supper.

Then they hit the road again. They passed a village, and not far from the village appeared Aghve, the summer residence of the King. At one side of the palace was a precipice, on the other side a large square. Some members of the Assembly came too early. The palace had been built in a forest-covered place, on a lawn in high mountains. Vaults and columns alternated merging with the surrounding nature. When the royal suite appeared, people receded in piety, opening the way to the saints and the procession, bowing their heads, then came again, taking turns to kiss the Holy Gospel in Bishop's hands before entering the palace.

The hall of columns was round. In the profound part, high above the all-around plane there was the royal seat that accommodated Vachakan. On his both sides and on the steps were arrays of cushions wrapped in luxurious silk, seating the high-ranking guests. Spread upon the floor of the hall were multicolored rugs and mats. The walls were covered with fine brocades and silks of different colors. The hall smelt of aromatic

water with rose petals. In the middle of the hall there was a big marble oval-shaped table with rows of silver vases full of dainties: sweet cakes, candies and dried fruits. The guests, both common people and clergy, closely sat on the mats. After the prayers said by Archbishop Shupghaisho of Partav and “Our Father”, the King addressed the gathering.

-I am Vachakan, King of Aghvan, Shopghaisho, the Archbishop of Partav, Manasseh, the Bishop of Kapaghak, Hunan, the Bishop of Hau, the bishops of Ootik: Anania, Sahak, Hovsep, the priest of Kaghankatooik, Matthe, the priest of Partav, Tovmas, the priest of King’s Palace, Abikkaz, the priest of Bet, Oorbatair, the priest of Manooche, priests Hovel, Parp, Mighe, Hakob, Bakoor, the Patriarch of Kaghankatooiki, God’s messenger Benjamin, other religious and secular guests, particularly Mookhik, Commander of the King’s Army, the Palace overseer Mirhorik, tribal chiefs Marut, Tirazd, Sparakos, Ghaman, Ratan, Arches, Gardmana Chief Brave Vardan, Khurs, Germanosan, Khosken, Pirog, the Patriarch, the warriors, who unanimously attended the Diutakan Summer House Aghve, present the regular items of the Constitution. I inform that the base of the regulations are the Rules of Great Hike Shahapivan, with certain localizations, that are inherent to our areas. A governor from Persia made an inquiry to us, why we did not use the regulations elaborated by Magi, I responded that our judgment goes after our Faith and the rules of our Church. King Vagharshak of Persia had allowed us to do that. Moreover, we are Armenians, and in our country there is room for operation of our own laws, so that we join one another and act in unison. And now I authorize Matthe the Priest of Darahoji to read the Regulations that have merited my approval.

Matte opened the parchment with solemnity and started to read:

-Item A. The priests that are in villages, will support the Bishop twice a year and learn the spiritual discipline from him, according to the Bible. In accordance with the established procedure, during the year, the bishop will receive tributes.

Having read all the thirty-two Regulations, King Vachakan addressed those present.

-If you have noticed that any important issue is missing, please, say your notice. It is important, lest it should be late, and you should say that the Regulations say nothing about that.

-Long live the King, bowing the head said Patriarch Bakoor of Kaghankatooik, then, rose from his seat.

-Say your opinion, said the King, - we all are listening to you with utmost attention.

-Long live our King, - said Bakoor, - the regulations are made up very true and fit our renowned scholars. However, I am concerned with one issue: the worldly people are for the most part illiterate, so these regulations will remain unused. And being unaware of them, can they live in the old lawless way and break them?

The Patriarch of Kaghankatooik fell silent. The king smiled with pleasure and said:

We shall order the priests, the schoolmasters, to spread at schools, to teach the Regulations. With the help of literate children to inform about the Regulations both the rural and secular people.

-Long live our King, - spoke Priest Matte, - I have ordered to prepare the parchments at my monastery, to copy the Constitutional Regulations, however they were in insufficient number for all churches and schools.

-Archbishop of Partav Shoopaghisho, make them prepare a hundred parchments, let them copy a hundred, let them copy Agave's regulations and distribute among the monasteries, communities, and schools, among the people and even the princes, priests, members of the Royal Family, all must know the Regulations by rote, so that the country become governable. Don't forget the Jigbers and other tribes populating the other side of the river Kur: the Lezgins, the Avars, the Lackkers, the Dargins. I extend my Royal gratitude to my wizards. Now, tell me please, is there anyone who would be against the Regulations?

-No, no, - cried Assembly Members in one voice.

-Is there anyone who is against a single item of the Regulations? Let him stand up and substantiate it.

No one stood up.

-There is none like that, King, - said Matte the Scholar.

-So, the Regulatory Constitution has been adopted by the Great Assembly of Aghve, - said King Vachakan, - take your turns now to come up and seal it with your signet rings. See, I seal it too, with my Royal signet ring.

The King dipped the boar-image signet ring into the prepared soot powder and pressed it against the parchment. Priests and nobles who were members of the Assembly approached one by one, to put a seal on the document written in proper letters, and adorned in worm red and gold, titled Constitutional Regulations.

-The Messenger of God must seal our God-line Regulations, - said Vachakan to Ben.

-Long live the King, - said Ben, - the seal of God is everywhere. If the Regulations are adopted and serve the stability of the country, then the seal of God is firm.

- Be kind and take part in our feast, - suggested the King.

-I am immeasurably thankful to you for your warm reception, and for the permission to take part in the Assembly, answered Ben, - I have yet another assignment. With you permission, I will have to take my leave.

-By the will of God, you will decide on your own steps, - said the King bowing his head, - in case you happen to visit this country, we shall be completely at your service.

Ben came out of the palace. Ashkhen was absorbed in a vivid conversation with the women of the Queen's retinue. Ashkhen was telling them something, and the women were giggling. Eventually, she noticed Ben who was waiting. She gave a kiss to each one and came up to Ben.

- Is the Assembly over? - asked Ashkhen.

- It is, - said Ben.

And again in front of Ben and Ashkhen's eyes there was a miracle. As if someone using the "Kanopus" or some other animation program of computer keys easily changed the

environment, and in the square of the early medieval fortress of Aghve at the luxury palace entrance Ben slipped forward and with a show of respect inherent to the dwellers of high places ushered Ashkhen in. Ashkhen, despite her poor dress, accepted this reincarnation with such splendor that she left an impression of an immaculately dressed woman. No one showed surprise when Ben came to the Assembly with a lady that time. Ashkhen in her turn was not too much impressed by this new environment and behaved as if it was nothing else but an ordinary assembly. However, Ben felt with what insatiable interest Ashkhen encountered that environment.

- This is the Great Ecumenical Council, - explained Ben.

Ashkhen put her finger to her lips. Ben stopped talking, for he sorted out that Ashkhen wanted to perceive and to understand everything herself. Of course, it was not too easy to sustain the environmental change of 15 hundred years deep, however both of them managed to conceal that, although it was boiling inside and ready to burst.

When the Members of the Assembly were fully gathered, an invisible voice said:

-It is appreciated that all of you have presented yourselves to the Assembly. We shall first listen to Ben's report, that is dedicated to the "Problems of National Minorities in the Light of the Global Development of Mankind". Pay attention, for this type of issue has been put on the agenda for the first time.

Ben was silent. He ignored, what impression was going to be produced by his declaration about the realm of microbes adjacent to puffs of clouds on the planet. Ben was in doubt. He was afraid of becoming a laughing-stock. Eventually he thought that if need be, the microbes themselves would instruct him or someone else to make a similar declaration.

-Ben, we are listening.

-It is my wish that you start thinking about the national minorities, about their rights, - said Ben breaking the silence, - if you don't do that, my report will be meaningless.

-OK, Ben, now we are thinking about the minorities. You can start.

-A continuous development of human society is a natural need, and is programmed as its essential principle. Happening within the society are extraordinarily complicated phenomena, their true comprehension and appreciation are very important. The most urgent of them are the study of International processes and the prevention of bloody conflicts. This complex and entangled method of conflict resolution can result from regarding the public associations and groups, states, peoples, nations, communities, as integral organism-entities.

-This man is teaching us lessons in history, - said someone, making use of a pause.

- Never mind, let him do it.

Ben continued:

-Analysis of International conflicts shows that a nonetheless difficult problem has confronted the civilization; it must conquer already the next obstacle – the deepening international controversies. Small-sized ethnic groups, as public integrities, living through their internal development and the establishment of their organisms, by nurturing their inner national self-consciousness and becoming aware of their bodies, are striving to break loose from under the pressure exerted by the majority group, to segregate, achieve autonomy and self-recognition. In this case, too, the prime mover is the need for a further development of the global civilization, which is a natural phenomenon. Among the latest examples of segregation of nations are collapse of the Soviet Union and formation of 15 New Independent States, the decay of Yugoslavia, the withdrawal of Nagorno-Karabakh from the structure of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic and the declaration of the Independent Republic, the secession of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia from the Republic of Georgia. Nowadays not only the large ones, but also the countries exempt from oppression, have retained inside them the interior intra-national oppositions. The nations that formerly led a joint struggle against oppression, are not ready to make concessions.

-What do you want to say, come to the hard matter, it is enough to beat around the bush.

-Do not disturb, let him report. Continue, Ben.

-Thank you, Mr. Chairman, - said Ben, - the public, political and governmental figures in their inner structures including the authorities of minority formations are concerned with these developments and with the threat of emerging 1000 states instead of the existing 200. To stop this phenomenon, the principle has been elaborated of the territorial integrity of 200 states, which is in fact absurd, being pregnant with the danger of confrontations overgrowing into bloody wars. Let us imagine for a moment what would happen if we tried by force of arms to stop the cessation of 15 subject states from the USSR. I wouldn't wonder if that would trigger WWII. And now, the implementation of the principle of territorial integrity in Azerbaijan and Georgia has resulted in bloody wars. Interference into a nation-to-nation problem or a military alliance will deepen the confrontation. The bad examples are the wars by US against Serbia and Iraq. In Eurasia and Africa hundreds of nations nourish a hope to get rid of national oppression. Many nations see it as an establishment of democracy inside a regime, which can result in some freedom for them. Other nations that confront the threat of annexation try to resist it with the force of arms.

-Mr. Ben, that will do, - said the Chair, - we can go over to discussion. Who wants to talk?

-The present-day 200 states is not a sufficient guarantee of stability, as some political analysts are trying to suggest, - said an unfamiliar voice, - the proof of that is the existence of explosive areas around the world and their continuous expansion. The big and strong states do everything they can to slow the process of the states' quantitative growth. However, at the present stage of history, the decision to retain status quo and the determination for the future, i.e., the contempt for the rights of the nations having no independent statehood, has always contained a hazard for developing and spreading the bloody confrontations.

- Another viewpoint? - asked the Chair.

Mr. Ben is right in the issue that the best way of assuaging

and suspending the International tensions is peaceful resolution of the problems, i.e. awarding the status of independent statehood to the national minorities that have attained the condition of an ethno organism and striving to become independent, - said a short man with an enormous head, so, a re-grown war conflict will undermine even a superpower, from which the nations that feel their integrity want to secede. Therefore, if the 200 in the world result in conflicts, then the system of a thousand states resulting from the fragmentation of empires and large states will turn into the aspirations of superpowers for world domination and the dangerous competition in their midst. Moreover, the self-preservation instinct of small states is much more acute and smart, so in this case it will be a lot easier to establish a common security system.

-I agree with Ben on some points, - said Aquino, - having achieved independence, small ethnic groups *nolens volens* will try to establish new economic and political relations with the neighboring countries, which will be an incentive for a further uplift of global civilization. In such a process of public development independence of national minorities will become an unavoidable necessity.

-But to my mind, the world will become ungovernable. That will even be counterproductive to the program of the "Negative Zeds".

-However, if the process of minorities seceding or going independent is unavoidable, why should the wars between nations be unavoidable as well?

-If wars are necessary for the development of civilization, why create the mechanisms of prevention? The matter is that wars are a natural mechanism of adjusting the number of people, are they not? Imagine, if not for wars, where would men live?

-We are discussing another problem. Following the collapse of the USSR, 15 subject states received the status of independence, which is in fact a most significant achievement of the global civilization.



-One of the stipulating factors thereof was that the Russian Nation that has been awarded the role of the host, also sought secession, since under the conditions of the USSR it was already losing its national singularity, as well as the territories conquered in the late Middle Ages.

-One part of its subordinate population having their own indigenous areas, under the new conditions have regained their social integrity and intend to use democratic methods of secession. The status awarded by federalism has afforded some appeasement, however it is not final.

-Thus the global civilization has been confronted with the problem of minorities. If this trampling of the rights of nations goes on, the collapse of those states will become inevitable.

-The host states, try as they will, to conceal the world-wide political disasters and their causes, their roots remain visible as the problems of national minorities.

-Hence, I want to summarize, - spoke the Chair again, - the first priority of civilization is going to be to obtain the just and urgent solution to those issues, otherwise the disaster will outgrow the local scale and will adopt a universal and unpredictable character. Thank you, Ben, I think we have not mistaken to have included you in the new project.

Ben pushed the buttons in front of him and Ashkhen, and the computer displays again appeared. Instead of the man talking on the screen, there was a text that read: "The situation demands our representative to leave for Moscow very urgently. That must be the person who had to have business in that part of the world, no doubt. It is quite possible make a choice. -Ben, you have been preparing a photo exhibition in Moscow on the subject of Shooshee, haven't you? He continued without waiting for a positive or negative response from Ben. You had also to publish a book in Moscow. What book was that?

Ben after a little silence gathered his thoughts and said:

-I am not sure about the interest that it will incite, but I will try to present it. -Ben shook off the constraint, and went on: -And an action book for schoolchildren, in two parts, the title is "The Celestial Roller". At the beginning the subject of peace.

Armenian and Turkish children, with other children and angel-like creatures coming from different countries of the world, take part in space games, they become friendly, seek together the Celestial Nuts of peace, wisdom and the Nuts of justice.

What do you understand by saying “a Nut”?

-In Karabakh a nut is called a Nut for nut trees, are mostly planted on a hillside lest they should occupy a lot of ground space, and so, a nut rolls when falling. The main character of my book is just such a Nut, who in this case is a creature from the outer space.

-As I understand, the Nut becomes a friend of both the Armenian and the Azerbaijani children.

-The children of Baku help the children of Karabakh to get free from captivity. In Book 2 the Nut takes a child to outer space, showing him the birth of new worlds, one end of the cosmic civilization, reaching the Solar System, planet after planet, first Mars, then reaching Earth, the birth of Mankind.

- Well, we know all that, - said a voice.

- Do you?

- At one of our meetings we discussed your writings.

- And what...

- And – nothing.

-But could I at least know, what I must do in Moscow? Don't you have a special assignment for me?

-It will become clear in situ. What you see, write it down. That is your assignment.

-OK. I will, - said Ben, thinking of Benjamin, - I would like Benjamin, too, to go to Moscow with me.

-It is up to you, Mr. Ben. You make your own decisions as to who you keep company with.

- I see, - said Ben, - eight years ago I travelled and I wrote, too.

- It has been discussed at our Assembly.

- Do you want to know my viewpoint?

- No.

- But I can do some amendments.

- We are interested in writing, and also the process of writing.

-Can you help in printing? It has to reach the public.

-It is not our concern. This is for the public to decide, it is their feed. Well, let us make it short. Travel by air first thing tomorrow

-I want to hold a scientific conference on genetic problems before leaving.

- You will do it after your return.

- The Zeds have already held a workshop on the subject in Tsakhkadzor.

- Tsakhkadzor, where is it?

- In Armenia. I was there.

- With the Zeds?

Doctor Lavey came up, whispered something in his ear. The monitor showed a close-up of the ear with a full-scale audio of the doctor's whispering. The Chair nodded his head approvingly and then said:

-OK, Ben in two hours a meeting will be convened on genetically modified organisms, you can take part, then you must go.

- No money to pay the fair or buy hotel accommodation.

- Who will consult him?

-Nshkhar, - said some thin voice. While the screen showed a fat man with a face of a Neanderthal man.

- Will you let me go with you, - asked Ashkhen in a whisper.

- Is Ashkhen coming with me? - asked Ben.

- Who is Ashkhen? - asked the moderator.

- The girl at my side.

- Is she a girl?

-Ben was confused.

... I don't know.

-First know, then say. She will be in your way.

- We will be transported by the Uneasy.

- Who is Uneasy?

- The one who has entered me.

-Who has entered you, what are you talking about? In this

condition, how can you make a serious proposal?

Could it be that you have already undergone genetic transformation, Satan has made his way into you, and you want to intrude the problem upon the Assembly. So, you see, we need discreet information from Russia. Kojgo, Kojgo, where is Kojgo?

-There is a revolution going on in Armenia, Kojgo wants to mitigate it, to restrict it to replacing the President only. He will be here in a few minutes.

-Again acting on his own? no unauthorized activities without an Assembly resolution from now on!

Kojgo entered in no time, with his bodyguards.

-What is going on, Kojgo, who are they? Out with them all!

Kojgo and his men left the hall, but soon returned, sitting around the table, in the second row.

-Kojho, report, what is going on in your country.

-It is a mess, treason, coup attempt.

-Stop it now, we prohibit any kind of change. You must abandon everything and take care of Benjamin only.

-Aye-aye, but I must say that I want to make him this country's President.

-That punishment... later, but now let him work. He is going to Russia. Tickets, business assignment.

-There are difficulties, - said Kojgo, - he has become intimate with my sister, a supernatural force has been discovered inside them.

-It is none of your business, it seems you are overstepping the permitted limitations, - said the Chair, then he commanded: Kojgo shall be demoted by one more ranking. We shall discuss him on our next meeting. Ben, you will act autonomously. The handle to be used by you is "Korek".

Ben and Ashkhen came out of the hall. Kojgo approached them. Ben and Ashkhen turned away. Kojgo was taken aback; it was noticed by the Assembly.

-Well, - said Kojgo with a threat, -you will yet see, who I am.

Ashkhen and Ben pretended not to hear.

Aquino came up to them.

-First, I want to congratulate you on your report, - he said, - that had fully overturned our idea about the minorities. But I have another thing to tell you. Do you have a guy named Vazgen in your staff?

-Yes, he is the Web designer of our Foundation. He is the key man for our sites. Incidentally, some satanic organization are trying to break our sites, however they cannot. Vazgen always stops them in their tracks.

-Do you really think so? And in actual fact Vazgen is one of the leading members of a huge Satanic structure.

- Vazgen, that timid boy? - asked Ashkhen, - incredible.

-Exterior has nothing to do here, - answered Aquino, - he hopes to become a follower of Dr. Lavey. -Addressing the approaching doctor, - isn't it so, Doctor?

The Doctor's husky voice responded:

-It is. His advantage is the computer, that is out of my control. He has discovered a virtual technology to implant a devil into man, and is trying to dictate his will to the world.

- Does he have a definitive purpose? - asked Ben.

-He has his own theory on adjusting the human civilization, - said Doctor, - and Benjamin is very convenient for him.

- Benjamin? - it is difficult to believe...

- Ben, I advise to go on cooperating with Vazgen, - said Aquino.

- I continue, - said Ben, - however, my double, who is staying in place, knows nothing and believes Vazgen.

Lavey said:

-That's what you think. But let Vazgen take part in the debates on genetics.

-He will hardly come,- said Aquino,- Paul Gaitsy will also be among the invited, see how he is putting on airs, wealth has darkened his brain. I think, Vazgen's influence in the Satanic world is on the increase. That can produce serious and unpredictable changes on earth. In fact there is a change of the principles.

-What about the ultimate purpose?

- They want to make adjustments to public phenomena.

- They say: "The devil is not so terrible as he is painted".

-That has been devised by the devils who want people to stop fighting against them.

-Can we control this movement?

-Ben, said Aquino, - you will invite Vazgen to take part in our Assembly.

-As far as I know, Vazgen follows our Assemblies on the computer.

- But he cannot record.

-Vazgen has placed recording cameras everywhere and is monitoring. He is also monitoring the Zeds.

-He has never been given this right.

-If he does it, then the right has been given, he is supplying data all around.

-Satan knows what is going on, said Lavey with annoyance.

-He dispatched info to the Azeris from Armenia, at the same time acting in opposite direction, - said Ben, - while the Azeri side assumed that the Armenians had weakened in the Margushavan direction, so the Azeris made an assault and received an unexpected counterstroke.

-Which is to say that he is a hundred-percent spy. But what if it is a trap on the Armenian side?

- No, he is implementing a special big program.

-Benjamin, too, is helping Vazgen.

-Me? - you are mistaken.

-You said it yourself that there is a devil inside.

- Yes...

-Doctor, look carefully in Ben's eyes. You must see the cold and hot there.

Lavey was standing in front of Ben looking in his eyes inquisitively. In Ben's eyes he perceived someone's threatening gaze.

- No, no there is no Satan there, but...

- What?

-I have nothing to do there. I am only writing a theory.

-It is your theory that is making a mess all over the world, - said Aquino.

-I am only a speaker on freedom, - said the doctor, addressing Ben. -Ben, the session on genetic modification is opening, do you have anything to say?

-On this subject the ZEDS have a serious contribution.

-How do you know?

-They have organized a scientific workshop on this subject in Tsakhkadzor.

-Perhaps you participated.

-No, I disrupted it and left.

-Could they eliminate you?

-A ghost from Shooshee helped me to escape from Tsakhkadzor.

-I would advise to take part right away, in one of the halls. Do not worry, they will find you and ask you in.

Ashkhen and Ben came out of the building, walked to a nearby grove. When they moved some distance away, Ashkhen said:

-Ben, first of all, thank you for bringing me here. However I am tortured by yet another subject.

- Say it, dear...

-Whatever I say, don't get sulky, promise you won't get sulky. Before leaving I feel that I have an obligation.

-But prior to that I must take part in one more meeting.

-Are you taking me with you?

-I don't know, if they allow.

-OK, I won't come. Ben, I am uneasy about something, please, don't get sulky, am I the devil's or am I yours? I wonder, whom I love.

Ben was silent for a moment, then gathered his thoughts and said:

-A serious issue. I understand your concern. I am Ben, you are really with me. As to what my inner devil has to do with our relationship, I cannot say. Perhaps he is like a bystander.

- Or like an insider...

-Let him observe from any vantage point. What is important is our love, feeling of happiness and personal experience...

- OK, I am quite pleased, only...

-What?

- Does the devil have anything to do with your unusual zeal?

-I have not changed since I was 18. I am 66, but I have not felt any inner change. If he has whatever role in that, we have only to be thankful...

- I love you...

- I love you...

-I want by all means to visit you in Russia.

-I'll be very happy.

-If you get in trouble, think of me and I will come.

-I may call.

-No, I will feel it. But one more point.

-Say it.

- Mother told me about your habit of sitting on a chair...

-And what does your experience say?

-All positions are good.

-Then you have no problems.

Seeing Vazgen approaching, Ashkhen said:

-Shall we part now?

- Yes, I am leaving tonight.

Ashkhen turned around and walked off without a word. Ben addressed the approaching Vazgen:

- I've got a proposal to you.

- In connection with Moscow?

- You seem to know everything.

- General information, no details.

-I want to talk about the next session dedicated to genetically modified organisms and the future.

-It has already been for fifteen years that the scientists deployed animals' genes, even those of ants, into plants and received high-yielding sorts exceeding the naturally produced ones in size.

-They continuously advertise their crops. They grow calves as big as an elephant, their line of breast reaches one meter. The biologists say that it will help them conquer the world hunger. However, it is a source of super profit both for producers and for vendors.



-An unpredictable chaos has arisen on our planet. Do you know about what happened at the ZEDs scientific session?

-A complete audio recording is on your table in the office. And the copy is here with me...

-Good for you, Vazgen, now we are going to discuss that problem, would you like to take part in the session?

-No, I'd better follow it at a distance. All the same, I am not going to speak. You will see the whole video, then draw conclusions.

A man came up in a blue tuxedo.

- But his wings don't have to be visible, - said Vazgen.

- What is it, do they fly by flapping their wings?, -asked Ben.

- No, - said Vazgen, - the wings are decorative.

- In a few minutes the scientific session is starting, - informed the tuxedo man.

Vazgen left.

Ben was ushered in another hall. Among those present there were no familiar faces, though he smiled to everyone as to old friends. When the participants hit their places, the Chair, a renowned biologist James Watson, whom Ben knew by his TV appearances, said:

-In today's debates we shall hear only the personalities dealing in public, political and economic spheres, the scientific staff will interfere only if strictly needed. Today's session has been inspired by Ben, the man we all know. Let us hear what he says.

Ben was not in a hurry to speak. In his television programming he never hurried. When on the air, seconds were ticking away, the directors got mad, while Ben was trying to gather his thoughts. This time, too, he examined the faces of those present seriously, as if he wanted to decide, what people have gathered, and what he could do for them, or in what way to present his report. Of course, for Ben the most important is the form of presentation in the first place, and if a certain discourse is delivered with a wrong energy or potential, it does not strike home. He has always recommended to evaluate the authors by their manner of delivery.

-You can start, Mr. Ben, - prompted the Chair.

-Dear friends, In the hereditary system of the genetically modified organisms the scientists deployed alien genes to produce the new varieties of high-yielding food crops and animals. Various genes of plants, animals, fishes, insects or man are deployed into chromosomes of different plants, fishes or cattle, resulting in the birth of living organisms of previously non-existent types.

-Can you give an example, - asked the chair, - I beg your pardon for the interruption, only please, let us not waste time on commonly known things.

-E.g., - continued Ben, - in the tomato or strawberry genetic system a deployment was made of a cold-resistant fish gene, in the potato – a snowdrop gene. That changed the common system of certain plants and their exterior.

-Those are crude violations of the laws of nature, the laws created by God, - said Cardinal Ravel from Vatican, a tall slim man, remarking from the floor.

-What of that, - spoke a man with a smiling face, answering instead of Ben.

-And what would you say if a plant should interbreed with an insect. What will be the result? Can you imagine?

-The insect will start growing and Ben's "Sky Nut" that has been described in the book, will assume the size of enormous ant, answered the Cardinal.

Scientists are interested, how their discoveries are perceived, - said the Chair, - let us go on listening to Ben.

-Yesterday I bought hen's eggs, - said a thick-bodied man with a small head, - when I boiled an egg and shelled it, I saw that there was only one third of the egg, the rest of the egg-shell was empty.

All of a sudden the hall was filled with a burst of laughter.

- What does it have to do with our discussions?

-My inquiries have shown that the origin of the eggs was genetically modified hens. That is to say, scientists struck a deal with the company manager and fulfilled a special order aiming at fraud.

- The eggs are to be sold shelled.

-We shall consider it later, - said the Chair, nodding to Ben, - continue.

-No doubt, there have also been positive experiences. Widely spread are genetically modified organisms of corn, soy, sugar beet, potato, tomato, they are sustainable against cold, draught, contagious diseases. Meanwhile, they ousted an unequalled local brand of tomatoes from the Ararat Valley. They are now trying to establish a stock of seeds for the local tomatoes, however, it will require years. That reminds of an economic aggression. Another example: The genetically modified "black potato", with added poison, exterminates the Colorado potato beetle.

The doctors say that it will also hurt man.

-I think it will not, - said the Chair, - however let us talk to a physician, Mr. Herzen, please, what do you think of it?

-With the greatest of pleasures, Mr. Chairman, however I have to note that the new studies have changed my and my colleagues' opinion that we have not yet had time to publish, or rather, some economic circles have put obstacles in our way. We have discovered that the cutaneous covering of man can be injured by the toxic matter exuded by black potatoes. When we had understood fifty years later that the new diseases are caused by those potatoes, it will be too late. The mice feeding on those potatoes developed immune deficiency and other malfunctions. People developed new diseases, which, as shown by the studies, are the genetically modified organisms. Starting from 1994, when it was allowed to sell genetically modified vegetables, diseases in US increased ten-fold.

-I want to mention one more problem, associated with the equilibrium of the ecosystem, - said Ben. -Natural plants are decreasing in numbers and annihilated. Genetically modified organisms are easily interbred with their wild varieties. That will result in the natural plants being eliminated from the environment. It is interesting to note that genetically modified organisms display a special interest towards their endemic ancestral varieties. And another fact that may be worthy of your

attention: The gene located in the plant appears in man's organism through food, crawls into his molecules, as well into the blood structure. A few generations later we shall feel the changes that will be irreversible. Perhaps we shall look for clean, non-genetically-modified people in the jungle of Africa and Brazil, deploy their genes in the people saturated with new organisms and try to find what has been created by God. Big and mighty organizations buy scientists and control them, risking the existence of our planet's gene pool, risking the ecological security. In this way the human civilization is gradually becoming victimized to the gain of a single group of people.

- However, those selected will again become victims of their own actions.

- That has also to be explained to the ZEDs.

- However, Mr. Ben is missing something. By deploying the genetically modified organisms

there will be no epidemics, the quality of public health will improve, and famine will be banished. In Darfur, in the whole of Sudan, there is famine, they have to be saved from starvation. Of course, there are some negative phenomena. But on the whole, this domain should not be shut down.

- Now one group centrally controls the International market of seeds and food. They dictate. Whatever you decide, they dictate.

- We are saving the world from starvation.

- The Swiss Government has closed the import of genetically modified organisms to the country.

- It has no right to make such a decision.

- The decision was taken by a referendum. African countries refused from humanitarian assistance because that will have a negative effect upon their gene pool.

- Good, - said the Chair, - let us now listen to the scientists. Mr. Locksley, please, tell us your opinion.

- My group does research on chromosome clusters that are formed in the chromosome's vertical position. You can see them using a microscope. They fill the genetically poor spaces. The "Trash DNAs" occupy huge spaces inside our bodies.

-Mr. Locksley, - objected Ben, - I am not a genetic engineer, but I will say that if one does not yet understand something, that does not mean that it is trash. This is how I see it: man is filled with living organisms, possibly even by billions of microbes, that control us. They have established a creature-society inside man, resulting in today's people and their association, and they gather in similar associations inside man. They are interesting forms of existence. It is possible that our organism is simply a data bank of the forms existing in the Universe. By studying our inner structure we can understand the Universe, its multiple capabilities. As to ourselves, upon the way of perfecting the structure of our human society we have to learn a lot from the creatures inside us provided we can understand and listen to them.

-Mr. Ben, how did you arrive at this idea? Scientists always travel on the way to discoveries, but this knowledge is the result of gathering the experience of thousands of scientists.

-I apologize to the thousands of scientists, for throwing a stone into their garden, but I must inform that I come to such conclusions at night, while writing a novel or a story. I only trace the progress of thought and try to succeed in writing it down.

-I think, Mr. Ben is hiding something from us, - said the Chair, - well, let us not stray from our basic target. First, those present want to know what is the so-called DNA.

-Perhaps I try, -the monitor showed a smiling slim middle-aged man, with a subscript: "James Watson, biologist".

-Welcome, James, only don't let it be a university lecture. Make it short.

-Gregor Mendel, a monk from St. Augustine Monastery in Brno, while doing research on plant hybrids, reported to the naturalists' society in 1865 about the hereditary descent when crossbreeding the pea seeds. That discovery earned him no recognition in his lifetime but he was severely criticized. Later however it was rediscovered and appreciated by the scientific community. DNA was discovered by Johannes Friedrich Miescher in 1869. It is the carrier of biological information that appears as a succession of

nucleotides with the aid of a genetic code. Gene is a unit transferring hereditary information, it is a portion of DNA affecting a certain character of the organism. A man's DNA contains 3,2 pairs of nucleotides. It is equivalent to 30 – 40 thousand genes. Francis Crick in 1958 discovered the generalizing order of the transfer of genetic information in nature. In actual fact, the data from the nucleotide acids is transferred to the proteins, rather than otherwise. That is the basic biosynthesis of the macromolecules.

-Well, now tell us about Dolly. Maybe just Yan Wilmot will tell.

-Mr. Wilmot is not present at our meeting, besides he is tired of talking about it.

-OK, Mr. John Gordon of Oxford has been inspired by your success.

-In 1977 he cloned fifty frogs.

-OK, Professor, present the work of your colleague.

-With the greatest of pleasures, Mr. Chairman, although the right of presentation primarily belongs to Schnike from Roslyn Institute, McViri, Campbell, who are here. True, I had started cloning early, however Dolly is the first mammal to have been cloned. It must be kept in mind. The Roslyn Institute biologists from the city of Midlothian in Scotland under Yan Wilmot cloned a cell of another animal. The core of a sheep cell was replaced by a cell of an old sheep's mammary gland. Dolly was born on July 5, 1996. We must remember that date, since that is the start of a new era in genetic engineering. What else yielding 29 embryo. Of those only one survived producing Dolly. The clone died in 2003 from pneumonia. While the first sheep cloned using human genes were named Polly and Molly in honor of Dolly.

-Does it have anything to do with practical life?

The British biologist Alek Jefrels used just this feature at the legal case of Tollin Pitchfreis. In the course of time the DNA accumulates mutations that become hereditary and go down into the progeny.

-Could you at least say what is the so-called mutation?

-I would advise that Andrey Vahanyan answer that question, who has a large experience in examining the authenticity of the Russian Royal Family remains.

-OK. I would better start with mutation, i.e. with an unexpected, jump-style qualitative change. Mutagenesis is a process. I wonder if I sound clear. DNA is located in the nucleus of the cells found in animals having the chromosomes that goes down only on the paternal line.

-What is it, mothers transfer nothing?

-DNA is there in mitochondria, too, being transferred only on the maternal side. In those DNAs, the study of unexpected changes enables a re-classification to be made of the history of human biological development, and of the emergence of individual races and nations. That is, using the generations, the evolution of history is retained within the genetic organisms. If a given gene hides 10 generations, that means that their DNAs have been used for the discovery of those 10. It has been revealed in this way that Thomas Jefferson, the Third President of the USA, had fathered a child of his slave Sally Hemingway. While among the family members of Nicolas II, the genetics has established a complete order, independent of whether individual persons want to believe it or not.

-OK, what about other positive developments? Mr. Gehani, please.

-You are quite right, Mr. Chairman, from the geographic point of view.

-Your remark is quite correct. You are welcome, let it be in the geographic sense.

-The developments are very numerous, - responded the biologist Hashish Gehani, - the diseases and diverse climatic conditions, they yield enough crops, meat, milk. Those are used in medicine, against old age, sugar disease, enable production to be organized of biologically active proteins to treat people and animals.

-Many representatives of business and industries are interested in those achievements of the biologists. This orientation however has been started quite recently. Animals

acquire many ugly qualities. E.g., the cloned world consumes meat. Are my observations right, Mr. Batajaria Shahoni?

-Do you this time, too, mean the geographic boundaries, Mr. Chairman?

-After Iran, we go South-East, everything is OK.

-No objections, Mr. Chairman, yours is the ultimate judgment. I must say that there have been cells of a Canadian Labrador-Retriever breed of dogs started training seven cloned Korean Sleuthhound puppies. 90% have satisfied the custom requirements, while in case of natural reproduction 30% has been considered normal.

-I have heard that a group of scientists are vaccinating using an insect gene into a human DNA so that the sense of smell should become dominant within the human society.

-This is quite close to the ideology of communism. Have you heard a story about Marx and Lenin: once, walking along a path, they saw a family of ants, they admired it and decided to develop the ants' abilities in man.

- Marx and Lenin lived at different times.

-It is immaterial. Let them be Marx and Paul.

-In Armenia following the vaccination against chicken pox the sickness rate of those vaccinated increased. Often there is a miscarriage or a sick child is born.

-One cannot rule out sabotage. You have a problem of genocide recognition. The ZEDs can mix the vaccine with a virus.

-However, this issue has nothing to do with the subject of our discussion.

-Seemingly it has not, But in reality considerations like those can be significant.

-OK, dear Members of the Assembly, - said the Chair, - this meeting is closed, let it become a starting point for our forthcoming discussions, other organizations will be invited, and new discussions will follow suit. You will get the printouts, you will study the phenomena and in a month's time we shall assemble to discuss results. Mr. Ben, please, make a special announcement about the micro world and on your info about the



source and its authenticity.

-I would like to take part in the next meeting, - said Ben.

-It seems that Ben likes the meetings. You, Mr. Ben, are a full-range Member of the Assembly, you will be briefed in time and be invited in due course. However much depends upon your new mission. Happy journey.

## CHAPTER 11

### LETTERS FROM THE SUBWAY

From the airplane window the earth habitations look like galaxies. Benjamin thought that on planet Earth everything reiterates the Universe structures subconsciously. Then he thought about his invisible double. He had always suspected that inside him some strange changes are taking place. It was as if he was halved, his capabilities were ripped off, removed, injected into someone else. Benjamin tried to conceal that situation. However, it was not always that he succeeded. Often that placed him in an awkward position. He lost his head over the arrest of his son. But formerly he would have resolved any problem cold-heartedly. Now there is an endless lamentation. When he understood that he had a double who is invisible, he got a little reassured. But what forces were behind that phenomena was a secret, what were those games for was difficult to sort out. It is interesting whether he is also travelling on the plane. Or is he being displaced automatically? He could be at all places. Last time the office door was closed, perhaps he entered through the window. On the seventh floor. If he has supernatural powers, let him free his son from the state security shackles. Eventually, everything is bought and sold in the world of man. He can get money as much as needed to stick into the throats of those insatiable. But what if the issue is political? It would be good to know, that creature, what is it like, what are his objectives. That Vazgen, he had not got any idea of what he was like. Once he defended the Azerbaijanis, said let them come and conquer Armenia to establish a democratic order.

Perhaps he thinks that the genocide or ethnic changes are among the means of establishing the democratic order. Of course, if there is no nation, there is no problem. No, Vazgen is not to be trusted either. But he seemed to handle some threads controlling the planet. He had left everything to Vazgen's care and was going to Moscow.

Who had prompted him the idea of going to Moscow? He had left the University lectures and went. It was his second Ego who had prompted. Whose decision was that? One has to examine everything very carefully. They instructed to write down everything. Who and what for?

Down below there was a plowed field. The sun lighted across emphasizing every bulge and pot. Perhaps the field had been virgin land; they plowed it with a big plow. They plowed it with a Japanese KAMATSU. He was still a freshman when he took pictures of this type of action in his native field of Margushevan, those pictures were awarded a prize at a Republican exhibition. And in the place of a plowed field there came about the Margushevan of Benjamin childhood. His heart was wrung. There came the childhood images of Margushevan. No, one has to have another look down through the window, to cut off Margushevan, the Mother's smile... No village and no Mother now. The space photography showed Margushevan and Maraghan fully burnt out, trees cut off. No way to Tonashen road with binoculars. As soon as he came back, he would make a nostalgic visit to his childhood's haunts, of course, if sanctioned by his double. There is no reason why not, being kind and tolerant.

Ben felt some movement amidst the clouds. One was heavily treading among the soft clouds, soaring upwards, and moving forward with difficulty. Then Ben noticed that the creature was looking for a gap towards Earth. What has he lost on Earth? Ben remembered his "White Abyss" story, wherein Father God, having left the Earth, moved amidst the clusters of soft clouds with difficulty, then looked for an opening in the clouds towards Earth, since he missed the planet Earth, the nature and the people. He even confessed on one occasion that

the creatures called man had not been created by Him. It seems that peoples' belief in Him has nothing to do with his existence and Glory.

However the specifically colored cluster of clouds gradually melted, the vision ended.

After a short time a long strong layer of clouds oozed from a snow-strewn field. The plowed field seemed to be endless. It started to burn under the sunset sun. The plane seemed to be going down to touch the field. What if it is not a field? Maybe the clouds played the "plowed field"? After a short time the "ground" ended and before Ben there was eternity.

The clouds, depending on their weight and density, occupy the places allotted to them. The human societies also are stratified in a similar way. Every one according to his degree of development has occupied a place on the planet Earth. It basically depends on in what way the human brains are placed and operated inside the society. If inside a given society there is a mess, everything is upside down, the weak start to rule the strong, the clever, ousting the clever brains, and the country does not go outside the claws of poverty. However in heaven it is nearly the same. Here clouds and vapors timidly obey the established laws. The plow-lands here are straight. If they are of clouds then what strength has arranged them in straight rows parallel to the movement of our airplane?

Then come a multi-layered clouds, fit to the Russian endless table land, the smooth clouds. At this place decisions are taken for different parts of the world, whether it is going to rain or to snow there.

The sun went down, and the horizon was painted fiery. Plow-land was replaced by endless mounds. On the horizon a line of clouds was stretching out and lengthening. An arrow-aircraft appeared at the edge, pulling behind a line of clouds. The plane turned left, showing the sinking sun in the window. Those last rays flashed and were hidden behind the clouds. Ben knew that at that same moment at another place the same Sun is setting behind the sea waves, behind the sands or behind the mountains.

While in Moscow Subway, underground, where, to while the time away, Benjamin sat down to remember and to write down, but the sun became reminiscence.

Eight years ago he came here to publish his book. Then, with the published book he toured the European part of Russia. It was at that time that Russia fell under the Sores' financial-psychological blows, resulting in devaluating both money and the book. However, Benjamin compensated those losses using the series of letters that he wrote when he travelled. Many things went into oblivion, however numerous moments were fixed in the letters and were saved from disappearing. Eight years later, Benjamin again was prisoner of the enormous Moscow crater, and, having to pass several hours in the Subway, he decided to use his spare time, and as assigned, to go on with the letters.

He settled in his nephew Garnik's apartment. By selling his flat in Vladimir, Garnik could buy a rather tight single-room apartment in Dolgoprudni, a suburban town near Moscow. For a family of four, it was too tight and in no way matching the open-hearted Garnik from Margushashen and his hospitable family. Garnik in connection with the footwear production after effecting a number of business operations in Dolgoprudny opened some shoe repair centers, to provide for his family needs.

-Do you know the publishing house of our Margushen dweller Slavik?

-Yes, approximately, - answered Ben.

-One repair center was located where they placed Levon, son of my uncle who had moved from Novorossiysk to Moscow. Such a naive boy and his simplicity many perceived in the wrong way. When he worked in Novorossiysk in a barbeque restaurant, he was approached by racketeers asking under whose umbrella he was working. Levon understands "umbrella" literally and answers jokingly: Umbrella, see, I have one umbrella up there, the other one is the roof of my house, I am quite safe, and I feel good. The racketeers seeing his self-confidence, for in those quarters everybody was horrified by them yielding their share without saying, are surprised at his bold answer, assume that he had a very strong umbrella, left in silence and never came

again. However, he got somewhat scared and did not feel good at all. His fear had to be eradicated.

-Can one cure it with another remedy, asked Benjamin, - it is a psychological problem. In Moscow there is a popular medical treatment for those cases.

-In Moscow there is nothing, but I think that now already there is.

-Who?

-You can, -said Garnik smiling, - Levon is a very unsuspecting guy, he believes everything very easily.

-What was it that he feared? - asked Ben pretending to be a fear-removing sorcerer.

-His uncle was fixing a tire, when the trailer tilted, crushing the driver's chest while Levon was looking. Following that event, Levon could not recover for a long time. He is now afraid of darkness, sudden voices, people...

Ben thought that a description of that accident could well engage those who were interested in his writings, and so he decided to yield to Garnik's wishes and to take up the role of a fortune teller.

He thought that his acquaintance with psychoanalysis by Freud during the student years could come handy that time. Of course, it was not too much. There must be a parallel usage of the methods applied by fortune-tellers. Most of them are petty tricksters who tear off money from people under narrow circumstances. Benjamin has always paid special attention to fortune-tellers, although until that moment he hadn't met a genuine one. However, in that case it was important to exert influence and to inspire trust. Last time when he found shelter with daughter Mona and son Hovik not far from Jrvej in a small self-built church of Our Savior, they met Vehanoosh, a very slim and poorly clad woman who had acquired a fairly famous hand as a fortune-teller. She rotated around Ben's head an aluminum pan filled with a candle melted in water and the relevant "charm" was pronounced eliminated. Then she mumbled a few words from "Our Father" and said:

- You have recently lost a lot of money.

Ben made a motion of negation with his head.

-You have had a grave illness.

-No.

-You have had a narrow escape from death twice. That was a new script for fortune telling suggested by Vehanoosh.

-No.

-You are concerned about your next of kin who is in a foreign land.

-I have no next of kin abroad.

-Then you have no reason to worry, - said the fortune teller indifferently, if there is no worry, the fortune telling doesn't go, - you have everything OK, but to make sure, I will pray once more, although the charm was removed by the charm planter personally.

Having again terminated the prayer with a few words from "Our Father", rotated the aluminum pan, and then proceeded to Hovik.

-There is a girl who wants to marry you, - declared the fortune teller, - she is a doctor.

-Yes, - answered Hovik in great surprise.

-Two years older than you.

-Yes.

-Your marriage will not get along, you hesitate, unsure that it is what you wanted, the fortune teller pronounced with great confidence, and then added: before spring you will meet one and get married unexpectedly.

-I am a writer, I am interested in fortune tellers, - said Ben.

-Oh, I see, it is interesting, I can point out some, said fortune teller, opened some French magazine, showed a colored picture on a double page spread, - it is my mother, you see, the same aluminum pan that opened the fortunes of thousands, it can make one happy. A holy vessel. My clients do not let me in without this pan. I got this article translated, if you like.

-No, I want no translation, - said Ben.

When the "holy place" was left behind, Sona said that it was just with Lusine, the doctor, they came to see the same fortune teller, the girl narrated about the complicated relations between

her and Hovik and informed about her expectations and concerns.

-You can see that this fortune teller is also a cheater, - said Ben, however people come with faith and take the so-called prayers as healing.

Anna, Garnik's wife, brought a candle painted blue. Ben melted it, poured it into water, fixed the remaining candle to the melted mass and kindled it. At that moment he forgot "Our Father". However, Levon does not know how to pray, nor about any ritual, either Christian or Pagan. All of a sudden a correction hit Ben's brain: Ben thought that his second again came to his aid. He started: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name..."- at the same time the pan filled with candle and water was carried around Levon's head, exactly like Vehanoosh did, then coming to the theory of Freud, Levon was said that if the patient recalls and tells the doctor the cause of his malfunction, he thus removes the disease from his inside and gets cured. When Levon finished his story, Ben solemnly pronounced:

-Now, with your help, I pull out of you your horror, fear, now you are fearless and brave, brother Levon, say after me that you are afraid of nothing.

- Now I am afraid of nothing.

With a swift movement of his hand Ben caught Levon's fear and burnt it on the candle fire.

-Well, my son, - said Benjamin solemnly, although he knew that grown in Margushevan,

Russian-school graduated and the Novorossiysk Armenian-pub-frequenting Levon could hardly understand what he was saying, - you must think that you have been born anew, for you have been freed of the demon of fear and horror.

Of course, Benjamin came to Moscow not to remove Levon's fears, but rather to organize a photographic exhibition "One hundred instants in the life of the Shooshee fortress city, so as to inform people about Karabakh and its problems. He believed that the Armenian Union of Russia would help. If he toured the Armenian communities, to continue the propaganda effort, he

would fulfill his commitment to the Assembly. However, with regard to taking the exhibition to the different Armenian communities, the Vice-President of the Armenian Union in Russia, the former secretary of the Armenia's Communist Party Central Committee Ter-Ghazaryan, shrugged his shoulders, saying: "We have nothing to do with it, let him take it any place he likes."

An advice followed to open the exhibition at the Cultural Center of the Armenian Embassy. On the way to the Armenian Embassy through the "Armenian Lane" there was a huge mob filling the area of the Armenian Consulate. Hundreds of people were crowding for days hoping to obtain certificates. Entrance to the consulate was blocked by netted partition. Some soldiers appeared arguing with the fretted members of the crowd. Those waiting informed Ben as to the market prices of the services. He made a few shots with his camera. He was immediately surrounded by the certificate-seeking people asking to carry the story to Armenia about the situation at the Armenian Consulate.

He came to the NKR Representation to write a letter to Armen Smbatian, the Ambassador of the Armenian Republic in Moscow in the name of the "Benevolent Foundation of Shooshee". Many days passed, but the Ambassador neither received Ben, nor responded to his letter. An opinion was voiced that the Ambassador evaded staging the Shooshee exhibition fearing a note of protest from the Embassy of Azerbaijan. He himself would have used this type of protest in favor of the Artsakh problem. He nourished a hope that Armen Sarbabian would help to open the exhibition at an alternative site. However, the expectations were vain. It was unclear, what was the priority for the Ambassador – to accept similar proposals or to show indifference. Ben knew that about ten previous Armenian Ambassadors did not return to their Home Country Armenia after the expiration of their term of office. The Ambassadors are appointed by the President. Thus he is personally responsible for those Ambassadors.



Benjamin did not wish to implicate his inner devil in this business, but step by step he made sure that without his help it is impossible to achieve anything.

At the Karabakh representation they advised on the problem of the exhibition to address the Administration of the "Rolan" movie theater in the street of Chistie Proodi, since its head was the Yerevan "Paradis". On the ground floor of the theater there was a bar and a show room. Although Elga, the show-room keeper was absent, Ben had no doubt that they would help in putting up the exhibition. A week passed before the final denial by "Paradis" took shape. Any talk about Shooshee was rejected outright. It was clear that everyone was intimidated by the countermeasures by Baku. Benjamin saw that in the last eight years a significant change has taken place in public relations.

What is the date? Didn't know. Is it Friday or Saturday? Benjamin, frustrated and disillusioned, staying alone in Garnik's 12m<sup>2</sup> flat, was trying to sort out, what was happening. Perhaps he cannot face the people, be persuasive. Maybe, error after error were too many. What was the devil that appeared inside him, he is outside life, does not understand the people or their needs.

He came into the shoe repair shop in the basement of an old building. A woman was clamoring and threatening Garnik.

-Your car has blocked the road, we have no access, - said the woman who was the authorized person of the building's administration, - I will see the community leader and have your workshop closed.

Her screams were reaching all around the building.

Benjamin caught an interesting tinge in her voice.

-Can I speak to you alone? - asked Benjamin.

The wicked expression on the woman's face melted in a moment, it was filled with pleasure.

-Most willingly, Mr. Benin.

-What! You know the name of my aunt's son?

-Who does not know that gentleman? The TV studios talk about him day and night.

-That beats me, do you watch different channels, not like us?

- Have you a satellite antenna? - asked the woman.

-No.

-What else do you want?

-If I put up a satellite dish, will that be OK?

-No, there are special TV channels, paid. When you put up that dish, come to see me, I will tell you all. And you, Mr. Benjamin, welcome, I am quite ready to execute any of your commands.

-No, why should I order you? You are within the Imperial System, how can I...

-The Empire, what is it that I should be in its system? It is all in all an umbrella, you can wish whatever you like. At the same moment it will be implemented. Incidentally, I want to disclose some secret thing to you. I knew that I was going to meet you some day, only hardly in this basement. It is overwhelming.

-Do you have shoes to repair? - asked Garnik

-Even if I had, I would not bring them for repair.

-Why?

-Because... I do not walk, - said the Authorized Person of the Building Administration and fixed her gaze upon Ben's eyes.

Benjamin felt her gaze and looked aside. They got outside.

-What is going on, - said Ben. What about those TV-shows, or serials?

-M-m, sorry, I thought you knew it, - said the administrator, perhaps I see you in my dream, and it seems to me that I watch TV.

-Don't tell me tales, I can do it myself.

-Ben, I will tell you the truth, a girl came to our house, friend of my daughters, she wants to see you. Will you come?

The house administrator was gone, but came back after two hours. Her voice showed respect and fear.

-The elder women of the house came and made hell out of my life because of you, saying: our best skilled man helps us, repairs our shoes free of charge.

They said, show us another Russian who would be so kind to us. They told me that if I do not ask your pardon, they would

complain to the community chief, that would be a disaster. Tell me, do you pardon me?

-Sure, I will tell them to stop complaining.

-My enormous gratitude, ask me for any favor.

-I want nothing, only about the car...

-There are puddles all around, I was angry. There will be no repetition.

The administrator took leave, happy to end the matter so easily, but in a little while came back to address Benjamin.

-I have spoken to the girl. At ten tonight she will wait for you. Here is the phone.

-But this is my mobile number, - said Ben.

-I don't have your phone number.

-Then let her call me, so we could meet.

-The building is old, it is to be demolished, - said Garnik, - the residents gathered to address the municipality, to provide a place for the workshop in the vicinity. The matter is that in new buildings surfaces are expensive. Otherwise investment will not return. I have not yet received any revenue from other workshops, so that is covered by the money earned in this shop.

-Levon works badly.

-The simple thing is that residents don't take their shoes to him for repairs. By the way, said Garnik smiling, - Levon has been completely cured, there is no more fear in him for anything.

-You can see that inspiration works wonders, - said Ben.

-Without belief rehabilitation would not have taken place, said Garnik.

-I am leaving, Garnik, - I said.

-Stay please, you see, so many customers are coming, you have a good foot.

-So, it is my foot...

-Before your coming there was no one, but after you came, there is no end to customers. I can refer them to other workshops.

-Perhaps old women often address you.

-Yesterday there was one who cried. Sons deny help. They don't take money from her for repairs. I had formerly a worker

here, one day she invited me to her country house. I say: how did you buy this luxurious country house? It costs half a million rubles. He said: an old woman used to come from time to time, I helped her, repaired her shoes. The country house was her present to me.

-Now you are waiting for your old woman to come and to award you a house.

-Your mother, who was my aunt, had always said: a kind act is never thrown away.

Garnic helps his mother, sisters, nephews, the old women of Dolgoprudni, so he never reached a point where he could have money enough to buy a new house. From Novorosiysk he brought Parkev, another of his nephews, nicknamed "Sugar". I noticed that Parkev would always give a delayed answer in conversation. It was as if he would recover from thoughts, gather himself, determine what has been said, and then find an answer. He works as a fixed-run taxi driver on the way between Dolgoprudni and Altoofievo. Garnik complained that he used to demand rent from him every month, although he cashed 1500 rubles every day. Garnic asked his friend Gagik who was the manager of that fixed-run taxi group who was a younger brother to Slavik, to raise the daily pay to Parkev, so that the surplus money would go to him, in order to provide for his needs.

-What, does he go gambling again? - asked Gagik who was a healthy young man with a smile on his face.

-I do not know, - answered Garnik, - in Novorosiysk he had become addicted to gambling, lost his apartment, his car, escaping from debt, he reached Moscow. I am afraid he will play again.

-In the casinos 70 percent is appropriated by the casino bosses, the remaining 30 percent is returned to the players, - said Gagik.

Perhaps Pargev's mind is always busy with the gambling machine, dreaming about happy coincidences and big pots.

Clanging in his ear were mother's words: if God opens a door before you, be sure to step in, And now one door seemed to open with a scroop. The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's

representative Andrian declared that he had met Kano from Shooshee who had promised to help Benjamin with the publication of his book. I had some hopes in connection with the Russian publication of that book "The Celestial Nut". In the first part of the novel a seven-year-old Hovik appears in the Karabakh war with the miraculous celestial nut in his hand. Adventures go one after another. The celestial creature on both sides of the front line makes the air so hard that it becomes impenetrable for shells, aircraft, tanks, generals, while the wind, the birds and animals can pass through without difficulty. Inside an extensive exchange of prisoners is done. The warring parties try their best to seize the almighty nut from the child. The Celestial Nut at the front line under the hard cover of the same layer of air organized the World Games with the participation of the teams from Baku and Mets Shen Village of Karabakh, from different countries: children from Russia, China, US, Georgia, Brazil, Palestine, Spain, Japan, France, Germany, Iran, as well as from Outer Space angel-like and other wonderful creatures. They remained since the times of Vachakan, however already emptied Eghaker village they seek and find peace, wisdom, the nuts of justice, they plant them, so that the fruit they bear, the wisdom, justice, peace spread on planet Earth, Benjamin has once been in that village, touched the stones in the old church, he seemed to have felt the breath of King Vachakan, communicated with him. And here in this village at the time of the next game the Azerbaijani and Armenian children become friendly, take their stand against war. With the help of the children from Baku the children of Metsshen escaped from captivity

After that Hovik appeared in Azerbaijan with a celestial creature where they did everything to lay their hands on the Lucky Nut. Eventually they managed to get free from captivity, however when coming back home, however, a sniper's bullet hit the Lucky Nut. A child Lucky Nut coming from the tree takes the child to the Outer Space, showing him the birth and death of stars, the appearance of a fragment of cosmic civilization in the

Solar System, planet after planet, settlement of humans on Mars and then on Earth.

Ben knew for sure that he saw and lived through it all. Now even convinced that if needed, he can summon not only a celestial creature, but also the characters of his books, stories, and other characters, that they will stand at readiness before him and will fulfill his will. However, Benjamin remembered that his characters are mostly wretched and poor people, who cannot help in any way, being themselves in dire need of assistance.

Kamo answered on mobile that in order to see him, Ben had to go to the regional center Kolchoogino of Vladimir Oblast. Woke up at six thirty in the morning. From Dolgoproudni he had to “Altoofevo” then by Subway to Shelkovizkoye station, and by bus to Kolchoogino. Woke up at six thirty in the morning. From Dolgoproudny one had to reach the Metro station “Altoofievo”, then “Shelkovitskoie” station, then to Kolchugino by bus. However, he could hardly reach the bus station at half past eight. The first bus left half-an-hour ago. He bought a ticket for nine-thirty, and had to sit in the waiting room.

Ben saw Benjamin quite unexpectedly, the latter was reading a magazine. Ben thought that he had to go about the fate of his son Hovhannes in Yerevan. He came up and sat nearby.

-You, my double. In Moscow? - exclaimed Ben in great surprise.

-Benjamin, - answered Ben quietly, - why did you leave Hovik in an indeterminate situation and came to Moscow?

As regards Hovik, he is in a slammer at the Security Service. I have found a good lawyer and the case seems to be heading to a good resolution. I am just waiting for good news. But why are you not in Yerevan?

-I, too, have come to be in those Moscows, said Ben, - cannot even guess when I am going to return to Home Country. I am not my own boss, you understand.

-I don't know but I can guess. When we finish this affair, we shall decide what to do next, OK, Ben?

-OK, Benjamin.

The policemen were checking the documents of the lady living next door. They usually patrolled the station area hunting for the migrants. It used to be the main source of their income. It is difficult to differentiate between the Caucasians and the Middle-Asians. Meanwhile, the non-registered or those having no relevant documents feel not very sure, get confused when meeting the policemen thus exposing themselves: Benjamin has not yet registered at the Embassy, therefore he decided to evade the guardians of the Law. He developed a type of behavior when meeting the policemen when he went ahead of them so that they were compelled to pull aside to let him pass. This time he gathered his traps and walked towards the exit, to evade meeting them. However the policemen blocked his way with a smile. Benjamin stopped. An invisible hand pushed him aside and stood up in his stead. Benjamin continued his movement by inertia and got out of the hall. It was only then that he remembered about his invisible double.

-Well, uncle, are your documents OK? - asked the policeman Beni.

-Do you think my existence is not enough convincing? - asked Ben.

The policeman addressed his colleagues.

-Liosha, Mish, come here, I have found an interesting man.

OK, Zhen, let him go, he is an elderly man, let him go after his business, we have no time. Check the Azerbaijanis of this type. Have nothing to do with the Armenians and the Jews. Haven't you heard the order of the Vice President?

-I do not divide people into nations, - said Ben to the policeman.

-It is wrong, - said the stout policeman approaching Ben from the rear.

At the same moment he surprised the policemen by striking Ben's back with his rubber club, however the latter passed unhindered through Ben's body hitting his friend Zhenia. Both the blow and his rapid transfiguration were surprising even to Ben, although he understood where it was coming from.

-Did you see, Jen, did you see what happened?

-But you hit me.

-It is nothing, you have seen, what man it was, perhaps not man at all.

-But they say all movies are lies. You see, how the virtual world has penetrated our world. -the policeman addressed Ben, - listen, man, are you there in reality, or are you not?

Ben stepped boldly towards the policeman, thinking that he would go through him freely, however he bumped against his body. The policeman, an extremely able-bodied man, pushed him back.

-Listen, what is this club of yours, is it indeed, transparent?

-No, what do you say, I beat ten people with it today. Haven't you felt the strength of a blow?

- Yes, sure, let me try it.

Zhenia snatched the club from his pal's hand striking Ben on the head with all his might. Ben made no evading motion at all, surrendering to the destiny or to the devil inside. The blow passed through Ben, coming out with the same energy, so that the striker lost his balance and fell down.

Meanwhile, Benjamin walked unobstructed to the bus to hit the road in a few minutes, However, seeing dozens of policemen gathered around the bus, while the square in front of the bus station was filled with the police cars with their signaling and warning signs on full alert, he withdrew. At that moment some mighty force raised him up. He slid up and looked down for a moment. The group of policemen, seeing the confusion of their three comrades, laughing over their improbable stories, dispersed rapidly. While Ben, following the bus, soared lightly towards the regional center Kolchugino. The forces that carried him gradually went down, and Benjamin easily boarded the bus.

Benjamin particularly loved the wooden houses of Russia with the windows separated by subtle ornamentation. Those little houses and their eye-like windows are like the Russian beauties. In many places the old houses were replaced by uniform match-box structures. Their euro-windows are not ornamented any more. It is a pity that that culture has nothing to



do with the rich Russian artistic traditions. It seems that one living in a flat with an ornamented window is quite different from the inhabitants of the euro-windows buildings.

Kamo Gasparian, the leader of the Vladimir-area Armenian Community, was not in. He sent his nephew Samwel in a yellow “Zhigooli” to invite Ben to dine out. On the way, the driver pointed out multiple stores, production sites and eating places, saying that they all belonged to Kamo.

Benjamin, who had never even smiled since leaving Moscow, laughed heartily.

-Why are you laughing, -asked Samvel.

-Do you remember the tale about Puss in Boots?

Samvel who was not wanting in humor, giggled. They saw Lenin’s stature somewhere, that resembled the Merculov statue in Yerevan. The Yerevan stature had been long removed, while here the memory of history has retained the memory of the leader of Revolution.

The restaurant where they had dinner was owned by Kamo. Then they went to School No.5, where Kamo was busy with the City Committee that was checking on the renovation works. Armenian boys were everywhere, from different parts of the Armenian Republic and the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. In the group of people Benjamin set apart Kamo who pointed out different places in the four-storey school building and provided explanations. Benjamin was sorry that this businessman and an active gentleman was not in Artsakh. Perhaps, he could not implement his whole capacity in Home Country. This is the way the capable people leave their country, they build up and improve the foreign countries. While a capable man is the dearest capital for a country, he must be appreciated to the measure of his capacity, find a place in society. That is number one incentive for development and progress.

Kamo Gasparian, not tall, tough 40-year-old man. First Ben showed his pictures taken at Shooshee and was very interested. He recorded in his computer some of the photos and footage of Shooshi. Then he showed the layout of the Russian version of

the book "Celestial Nut". Kamo suggested to address his friend who was manager of a printing house in a Moscow suburb.

I will resolve all financial issues, said the Shooshee resident.

Before returning to Dolgoprudni as advised by Kamo he went to the furniture factory in Kolchugino, whose manager was Andrey. He narrated that since the very beginning he started it from scratch and brought it to the present level. It was a small serial production. They produced chairs and tables. They never used chipboards. Everything was from clean wood. The clients were pleased. The factory was growing continually. Andrey came to Kolchoogino from Edesia village in South Caucasus populated by the Armenians. His family name became Gavrilov from Gabrielian. The village dwellers were exiled from Edesia in Modern Byzand or the city of Urha. Andrey narrated about the difficulties of remaining Armenian in their village of 10 thousand Armenian residents. Among the boys of the factory there was one Dima Azariev who said he was from Derbent. Benjamin was glad to hear that, for he had been in Derbent a countless number of times.

-The majority of population are the Azerbaijanis, - said Benjamin, thinking that he could be an Azerbaijani, however the name Dmitry could have hindered him.

-My nationality is Tat, - said Dmitry as if reading Benjamin's thoughts.

-Yes, I know your story. You are an Iranian people. In the Middle Ages one part adopted the Jewish Faith.

-Yes, they call us "Highland Jews", however we are not oblivious of our Iranian roots. Many moved to Israel. But for us it is yet convenient to be called "Jews".

-And did the language remain?

-Of course, we talk Tatian at home, but when we go to school, everybody calls us "Azerbaijani".

Late into the evening Andrey and Benjamin went to Moscow. He wanted to take Benjamin to Dolgoprudni. At the railway there was a jam.

-Let us go back, - asked Benjamin after twenty minutes of waiting, - I will take a train from Altufievo. You will also reach your family.

They came back.

Garnik declared that he could not by any means find his aunt Hamest and her family. In the hard years Hamest and her daughter Larisa and her little girl Inga after the occupation of Margushevan moved to Yerevan. However, surviving in Yerevan was not very simple either. Benjamin's workshop converted temporarily into their dwelling, was hazardous for a child only because of its humidity. One day the workshop was empty. His aunt left Yerevan with her family. In a few days he got a wire that they found shelter in v. Arsenevo, of Tula Oblast. Larisa supported her family by renovating apartments. When eight years ago Hamest went to see her aunt, she had a grave illness. She could not recognize Benjamin. The lady doctor said the situation was hopeless. However, Larisa, who was boundlessly dedicated to her mother, nursed her and cured her. However they are relentlessly persecuted by destiny. The beauty Inga married an Armenian boy. It became clear that the boy was a drug addict which was very frustrating for the eighteen-year-old girl. Inga was compelled to take her newborn child and go back to her mother's house.

-I don't know myself, whether to blame Destiny or my aunt, - said Benjamin, - she, Hamest, in her time, left her Gavrosh from Maragha and clutching her child, returned home, then Larisa in Baku left her husband and came home with Inga in her arms.

-The husband perished in the Anti-Armenian massacre of 1990 in Baku, - said Garnik.

-But prior to that they had already divorced, - clarified Benjamin, now, too, her daughter came back home with her little son.

-My friend informed that they left their house in Arsenevo and moved to Tula. Inga is a waitress in a restaurant, said Garnik, - I will inquire right away, whether they are in Tula, we shall visit them, but if they have returned to the district center, it

is at the Belorussia's border, the roads are terrible, we can hardly go.

-OK, Garnik, - agreed Benjamin.

On the next day he left for the city of Jeleznodorojni. The publishing house is located on cement. It hadn't been painted long, the face is cracked. Steel reinforcement was seen through the openings in cement. The statue was abandoned to the care of nature. A layer of snow added a comic effect to it all.

The Printing House manager Michael Sergeev is charging 65 thousand rubles for two thousand copies. With regard to the promise by Vasily from Margushen, Ben agreed. However, on the next day the Printing House manager declared that Kamo will give only twenty thousand rubles, no more. What remained was to call Vazgen. A year before he met that Artsakh-based businessman in Yerevan. The latter came to purchase an apartment. He promised to help the Russian translation of the tale to be printed in Moscow. Two days later he called and brought 30 thousand rubles. Of course, Ben wanted to deal with another printing house of a better quality. However, Kamo Gasparian ruled to have it printed there.

The printing house workers were the Uzbeks from the Nukus center in Kara-Kalpakia. Benjamin said that he had been in Nukus and was aware of the conflict between Uzbekistan and Khazakhstan for that self-governing district. The founders of the USSR had intentionally created pretexts for territorial disputes between neighboring countries as if to preserve the integrity of the Soviet territory. However, it is known that those meaningless divisions have served as pretexts for fragmenting and weakening the USSR. Awarding the Armenian lands to Azerbaijan by the Bolsheviks not only demolished a huge Empire, it is also keeping the world under tension to date. Mr. Oshi talked to the Uzbek workers on the Fergana events. They worked and slept in that printing house. No doubt, it was very convenient for the printing house manager to hire inexpensive labor.

After perfecting the book design using version 7 of QUARK-EXPRESS with the help of Ruben Muradian, editor of the journal

“Karabkh Express” at the Mission of NKR, Benjamin again hurried to the Printing House. However, with each new initiative there appeared new difficulties and it was as if each step that he made triggered a new trap set up against him. It turned out that the Printing House computer had only the 6<sup>th</sup> version. On the next day he bought and brought to the Printing House the DVD version of the program. However, surprisingly, the Printing House computer did not have the DVD-reading program. While the computer girl knew nothing about the Quark-Express program. Again, there was a need to find a CD with Version 7 in a Moscow store. That did not help either. The Printing House girl could work only with a printing version of the program. Ruben patiently transferred the whole book into the printing program. That action took him a whole week. Benjamin’s persistence and patience seemed to have no bounds. Well, he had no other outcome. It was either win or lose, he could not come back to Yerevan empty-handed. He knew there was nothing that was unachievable. The book was keyboarded using the new program and submitted to the printing house. There was nothing that could prevent the book from being printed. It turned out however that the last four pages of the book were missing.

Benjamin mind could find no outcome from the situation. He started to think about his second mode of existence. Now he could be sure that it would help him. And so, he woke up early in the morning and started writing under the dictation by the inner voice.

“And the author again is confronted with the imperative of conventionality. Sometimes he intends to terminate the Nut theme using the two narratives covered in the book. But in actual fact who compels the author to go on with the theme, to open in advance the secrets about the Nut? It seems that someone so arranges everything that the author should fall into a trap. And so he inadvertently starts to discover the stories on the adventures of the celestial Nut that had appeared on our planet. The author now feels that he had appeared in the situation of Hovik, the book’s character, in whom thoughts

interfere with a celestial entity, to prompt his will. The author feels some invisible presence. They prompt him to abandon Hovik and to choose a new character. The Nut has already chosen the Author's grandson Alex. When did the Nut achieve close friendship with three-year-old Alex? The Author himself thinks about his elder grandson Nikita, whose pictures are all over his book. Alex every day forces his grandfather to write about new adventures, but when grandfather himself gets into a difficult situation, he offers unexpected solutions, not, as it seems, without the Nut's assistance. And the Author every moment feels the presence of the Celestial Nut. That means already that he himself, the Autor in his turn cannot avoid the presence of the Nut and has to fulfill all his wishes, that is to write and to write.

Following the adventures in the Universe and in the Solar System, the Nut and the child are submerged into the layers of the history of human civilization, discover many secrets of the past. Awaiting the reader here are new adventures. Since both American and Russian special services had focused their attention upon Hovik, trying to reveal the secrets of the most capable Nut, they had never paid attention to the disappearance of Hovik's junior cousin Alex. As is commonly the case in tales, our heroes did not go into the pages of old and magic books, but rather created around them the happenings aged 30 thousand years, sharp changes taking place on the face of the earth, the appearance of modern personalities close to the Neanderthal man, the beginnings of the human civilization...".

Exactly as two years earlier, the new heroes of the novel – the celestial Nut and Hovik penetrated inside Benjamin making him their prisoner. Submerging with them into the depth of human history is also the surrounding micro world. People imagine that they are the rulers of this planet, however they act under the dictatorship of the microbes that rule their micro world. They have their own, highly developed civilization. When they reach the limits of their capacities, they decide to exert their

influence on more considerable circles. For that, they choose the environment of the human ancestors, they penetrate inside them, and create a huge system. An existing underdeveloped brain undergoes modification and is improved, converted into a rather complicated system, fed with thousands of programs. They provide people with individual capabilities, and also with herd instincts or public capacities of thinking, generating and developing the civilization with the fellow tribesmen, and discovering new ways of its uninterrupted improvement. Conferring such capacities

to mighty individuals, the microworld is ruling the world making changes to it.

Thus, coming into existence in the Moscow Metro is “the Celestial Nut”, another, second science-fiction story. In order for that story to be justifiable and convincing, a celestial entity and a terrestrial son must enter the other world, to follow what is really going on there. However, the entities that came to visit the microbes see that the hosts of the micro world are frustrated because the creatures that they had created have gone beyond the borders of the control system that they had created, their programs created and deployed into people do not work but become uncontrollable. One part of them, certain ZEDs had been preparing to enter the self-annihilating programs. The Nut and Alex understand that their entrance into the world of microbes had been programmed in advance, and they had to save the human civilization from destruction.

An alarmed voice of a young woman in a fixed-run taxi seemed to have taken Benjamin out of the micro world. He was speaking on his cellular phone seeming very concerned.

-What is it, did you go nuts, follow your hand movements, there is one above you, isn't there? Where? Well, I am on my way. -Disconnect communication, but after a little while there was a sound of a bell. -What is it?' The child is in a mental hospital. Does he carry a cellular phone? I don't know what he did, broke it or burnt it...

At a casual glance it seemed that the beautiful woman must have had no problems. However her child has been placed in a mental hospital that does not follow its movements.

In the lane leading to the Metro a group of policemen were carefully examining the passers-by, stopping the suspects to check documents. Without looking Benjamin walked through their midst. At Petrov-Razumovski station a dog came into our car.

"It is interesting, does he know that he is in the subway and where he is going? - Perhaps it is our illusion that only we among all creatures understand everything about this world." An elderly passenger got some food out of his bag and offered it to the dog. The dog looked at the man with sad eyes, while the latter spoke: "Eh, what is my woe and what is your woe..."

The dog never sniffed or showed any interest in the food. Took off without haste, sat down in a corner, put his head on the floor and slept. Benjamin thought that he had been in a cruel fighting during the night for his beloved she-dog, now he needed some respite from the world of the dogs, and then he will try his luck at some other place. As soon as he has gotten up, he will get out at an occasional place in a city, to find a new environment, with no wolfhound having privatized all the females around. He may have escaped from a master-shepherd before hitting the streets of the terrible city.

A little aside a beautiful tall girl took a firm hold of a horizontal bar raising her skirt to show the body. A boy carrying a bundle of plastic bags, snuggled up to the girl on the other side, clutching on her exposed hip with the other hand. The bundle was hanging on his fingers. The other hand was grasping the girl's breasts, face-to-face, whispering something.

The girl, about 18 – 19, was scared. In the Russian of the young man Benjamin caught some Yerevan stress. The girl's face was petrified. In a moment Benjamin noticed that the boy had vanished. No doubt, the conduct of the boy would have never been approved even by the skinheads...

The girl standing in front was tall, long-faced, as if someone had specially drawn it, making it thin however the top layer was



ripped off from the lower lip, the mouth remained half-open forever. Because of this action, the brows jumped up, as if they had nothing to do with the eyes, as if they were drawn as two bows on the forehead.

The glass dividing the bus driver from the passenger room carried a large portrait of a lion. The lion face was black. They are also divided into races. The lion was looking at the photographer with self-confidence. Facing the passengers there was a girl sitting against the background of the lion, with her loosened hair well matching the black-faced lion.

Benjamin looked at the lion's eyes with resolution, ready to fight against it. The lion shook his mane one moment, and looked at Benjamin, ready to attack him. However, something held him back.

For a moment Benjamin saw that the dog from the subway train running at the side of the bus turning his head towards him.

At the subway station he was met by a group of skinheads. From their conversation Benjamin sorted out that they had been waiting for him long. He was aware that they were hunting non-Russians in dark streets to give them a brutal beating. There were also cases of killing. Benjamin tried to avoid a direct encounter. However, the skinheads were following him. It was clear that those groups coordinated their actions with the police helping each other. Benjamin decided to leave everything to fate and to the will of his second. When the young skinhead approached, he wanted to grab at Benjamin's clothes, he shirked rapidly and span around appearing behind the skinhead, which was an advantageous position. With the middle finger Ben slightly prodded at some point in his chin. The skinhead half-turned and sat on the step, unconscious. The skinheads were angered even more. Ben sent his real second up, to separate him from the skinheads. Benjamin remembered nothing.

Autumn was ending, the Russian winter was setting. Everything was white. Benjamin was surprised by the nature's perfect mechanism of evenly distributing the snowflakes upon the whole terrain. Rain and hail have the same type of

distribution. The snow-covered double-tilted roofs of the village are like headgears of brides. While the sculptured ornaments around the eyes of the window are like long thin eyelashes, reminding of the Russian girls' beauty and attraction. The wide-spread whiteness is interrupted by black spots emerging from the branches of trees. And there goes on an unyielding struggle between black and white on the threshold of winter.

The plants became rotten and yellow, rustling under the breath of wind, to show that they are still alive. Fruit-bearing plants with thorns and thick stalks are motionless. They are patiently waiting for the coming of Spring, when the shell of thorns will rip open, sending the seeds all around to continue the existence of the species, that originated by the will of God from time immemorial. The plant knows that before Spring no animal will dare to eat it, not to prick the tongue. Well, what cow will eat it in town, only dogs are darting around. Dogs are not vegetarians, only when sick they hurry into a green field to find the singular plant that would save them. They do not know what they do, and people say that it is the DNA that is programmed, that a program is triggered and the dog unconsciously runs into the field. In Spring, the thorn shell will rip open, the seed will drop in the mud, of course unless it doesn't get covered with asphalt at that very moment, it will again sprout, then bear fruit like millions of years before. But if in spring the chief executive passing here should notice and order this section of the street to be covered with asphalt, all the same, the plant will try to find a crack, to rip off the cover of black oil. However the asphalt layer is habitually made thick here. A smiling, thin-bodied girl with slender legs and tight trousers feels the gazes of boys, walking so that their passionate eyes follow each of her movements. The boys know that she has invested everything into her gait, passion, lust, light and casual desire to live through a momentary pleasure.

The area near the Jeleznodorojni ceramic factory was suddenly flooded with panic and anti-fire signals. I hope the Printing House is not burning? Not far from the entrance there

were flame tips. Lenin smiled from his cement stand to the firemen who put out the fire rapidly.

Thank God, there is no danger to my books, thought Benjamin.

In the subway car he was faced with two broad-shouldered men. Both in black clothes, scarves, fancy hairdo, tall. It was easy to guess that those were father and son. There was sadness in father's eyes. The younger man stood face to face with me, and I noticed a torn place between his legs. So, he either not yet married or divorced, since no one looked after him. Maybe an office worker. Monitoring the mental development, the clothes or torn trousers are not so important. He may have thought that it was a place that was not too much exposed. Of course, father did not know about the situation with the son's trousers.

When I followed the young man with interest, I felt for a moment that the father in his turn was eyeing me with great interest, and when I started to make notes, his interest increased, to what Benjamin was writing and who he was.

At the station to Dolgoprudni there was a huge queue of people. He mounted the bus in no time, and the latter moved. Unsure that he boarded the right bus, he asked a passenger:

- Is it going to Dolgoprudni?

No, you boarded a wrong bus, was the answer.

He wanted to get off, but another passenger, an elderly man, said.

-You did it right that you took this bus, we shall alight at Vinogradni, from there to Dolgoprudni is only a few minutes. At the Bus Station you will board any bus to go home. This is the safest way for you.

Ben looked him in the eyes.

-The Nazi are looking for one Armenian everywhere, - said the passenger.

- Any Armenian is an Armenian for them.

They got out at Vinogradni station, crossed the highway, entered the Vinogradni village. Why it was called Vinogradni, is unknown. Perhaps someone tried to grow grapes here. The

night-time village seemed empty. At some places high-rises were under construction.

-They say that in old times an Armenian brought a seedling of musket grapes here, and tried to grow grapes. They say everything was going well, but the grapes did not ripen. The village name since then became Vinogradni.

-Did you say musket? That grows in my native Artsakh. That means that the Armenian was an Artsakh man, my compatriot.

-Yes, perhaps they brought him prisoner from a remote place in the South.

-It was in the mid-sixth century, and the attackers were called Rosmosoks by our history writer. Now Moscow is incessantly swelling, growing, said Benjamin, remembering the same type of problem, that sprang up in Armenia and in Nagorno Karabakh, in connection with Yerevan and Stepanakert, which were growing disproportionately compared to their countries.

-Yes, it is our pain, - said a fellow traveler, and then continued, - you never know, whose country it is. A certain Abramovich can become a possessor of twenty billion on our account, and to appoint his own man the country's President. When will Russia come to her senses?

Benjamin was unexpectedly seized with a strange feeling of loneliness. It was difficult to guess where it was coming from. The body seemed to be in pain, however no painful place could be felt when touching. He thought for a moment and understood that he had no more support. What may have happened to his invisible second, he could not know, but he felt that something did happen to him. Maybe he got into a strait and needs his help? It is a pity that he had not too many useful properties. He could only write, nothing else. If he is his soul, that is no more, that has ascended to heaven or to some other world, that means that he is already a dead man. But he is, thinks and writes. But what if he is the hero of His dream? No, something is wrong here. It is possible that just he, his invention, can result from illusion, but he is, he exists. If he is alone, then he must be very careful and must fulfill his assignment with patience. However,

who has ever declared to him such a thing? He has never closed any agreement with anyone, no one has ever promised anything. It was in his brain that an idea was generated that he should write notes. The previous time this type of a program had been implemented. But there was no one to help in publication. If the notes taken at differing times should be joined, something interesting might come out.

-Oh, Lord God, called Benjamin with dismay.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE SHAMAN

Ben felt that instead of smooth flight he started to do unusual tumbles in the air and to fall down. The drop was uncontrollable. Had he known that he would be dropped from that altitude, he would have fetched a parachute. His only care was to avoid falling on the head. He was sorry to have abandoned himself to the devil's care. He must have been ready for the unexpected things. Prior to falling he felt some important change, as if his whole body was in pain. They could have at least put him down, and then abandon. Or they don't see the difference between air and river. What a calamity! Ben felt that because of cold air, his face was freezing. The body started to tremble. Had he put on warm clothes, he wouldn't have been frozen so. However, before you die, what difference does it make whether you freeze or melt. The earth was rapidly approaching. With bated breath he hit the ground, plunging into the snow. He tried to stand up, but failed. "this is what death must look like", thought Ben. But it was not clear, whether it was after death, or not yet. It was good that it was not. He would have lived as ordinary mortals, eaten like them, felt earthly pleasures. Is he Ben, or Benjamin? That is also important. What surprise has been in wait for him from the devil, it was not clear. He tried to get up. Perhaps the devil had received another assignment from his superiors, and departed, forgetting him. The devils, too, have their concerns, they could

hardly deal with one man only on end. True, Ben could not move, but he could see and feel everything. He felt soft and cold snow under his face. He was placed rather comfortably, and he felt it with his tongue, he could even move his head a bit and take up the coldness with his lips. The fresh fluffy snow melted easily in his mouth. It remained to be seen where he was. By some unknown reason, he remembered his journey through the deserts of Central Asia. He had been lost in Betpakdala desert, of the encountered shepherds no one knew where they were. Those people did not know that the Earth was round, that there were many countries in the world. For them, the best place was the desert. As to where Ben was going to get fresh water, he did not know. Only a hundred kilometers from that place was J eskazgan, a spaceport.

Now he got into Siberia. It was Siberia, quite sure, for it kept spreading towards South-West. He saw a sled pulled by deer. The man with the sled had seen Ben's drop. To make sure, he looked around again. There were no traces. Fixed his gaze at some point, as if he saw the devil with a gloating smile. He showed a fist in that direction.

-Shaman... called out the tundra inhabitant.

He turned Ben around, looked at his face, spat and moved away muttering something.

Ben wanted to call him, but could not. He felt he had no strength. In his mind he called, he screamed, however his voice was muffled in the snowy emptiness.

After a while he heard a wolf's growl. Then he saw the fierce wolf's eyes. He remembered how once he was surrounded by a gang of wolves, climbed into a tractor cab and bolted to publish it all in the novel titled "The Newly Found Days", finally, his hero was eaten by the wolves. Now I am the hero of my book and I will enjoy the happiness of becoming fodder to nature, thought Ben and surrendered himself to his fate.

He came to himself again. Someone was observing him. Not far there was a sled with deer.

While going towards the Cosmonauts' monument Benjamin felt some heaviness on him. The feeling of awaiting failures was

weighing on the inside. The street was empty, he hurried to cross it. However he did not notice that the street was one degree lower and could hardly hold him, lest a car emerging from nowhere would run him over. This is the second day of his failures. Although the failures had started long ago, he did not notice them anymore. In the grocery store they noticed that his 500-ruble bill was counterfeited. That certainly was the third failure. He walked carefully, to avoid the fourth. In the subway he lost his bearing for a moment and deviated towards the right-side train. The subway for him was a web, wherefrom a drop-in would never go free. It was for two months that Benjamin was its prisoner. It only remains that the spider should appear and... Here people read books, newspapers or sleep, pricking up their ears to catch up the speakers' words marking the next stations. Benjamin, as always, takes out his notebook putting down both his failures and good deals. At one moment he stopped writing to look at the multiple human faces. Russia has become a huge mixer of nations. At the time of the Mongol rule the country was filled with narrow eyes and wide cheekbones. Then came the Tartars, and the Asian features in Russians became habitual, all the more so that each woman was obliged to have a child from a Mongol or a Tartar, it was like a tax. After the creation of the USSR came the Caucasians and the Central Asians. The Russians moved cultures towards their disappearance. The Russians in their turn were losing their Russian type. Instead of the Russians there is a new type of people coming, the Ruslanders.

A group of girls appeared in the car in a state of great agitation. They were easy and unconcerned. Laughing endlessly. Of course, - thought Benjamin, - they have not brought an exhibition to Moscow, they are not trying to find an exhibition hall, are not publishing two thousand copies of a book, nor are they concerned with bringing the contents of the book home to the readers. It is however interesting to look at the faces of girls. One of them seemed familiar to Benjamin. She was very much like Angela, the classmate. It seemed as if there was a reversal of time by miracle. I wanted to shout, to bring

back what had been lost. They have just finished school, and Benjamin preferred to smother, to lose the love in his life. In this way, little by little, as if again and again he was losing the Subway-like re-incorporated memories of love. Only three stations later he understood that he was heading in the wrong direction. Who has ordered to send him in the wrong direction? He did not know, whether that was the end of the troubles that had been foreseen for that day. He could only conclude that caution will not help to avoid those. He thanked God that they come and go easily. He took the reverse train. Made himself comfortable in the very rear of the car. In the metal handle of the door there was a package made of paper. Someone dumped the paper, was not interested. The elderly woman sitting vis-à-vis looked alternately at him and at the paper. The place at his side was free. She changed places, opened the paper. Benjamin also had a look. It was a military paper. The woman was displeased, she crumbled it and returned it to the old place. Two boys appeared in the car, and quickly started to paste green-colored papers on the glasses. The Metro speakers continually announced that personal papers, announcements, advertisements should not cover the car windows. Benjamin approached and read the boys' papers: "Try the grass, you will feel the source of happiness. You know that in Russia the use of narcotics has reached enormous proportions, in fact, the state and the public could do nothing to stop that disaster. And the society is not aware of the hazard per se. The boys getting out of the train walked towards a group of policemen in merry disposition. The driver informed that the train would not go further, asked to vacate the carriages. Benjamin awoke from heavy sleep of an elderly man, remembered that he had to get out of the train. The passengers vacated the car rapidly. However, a newly woken up passenger got his crutches without haste, adjusted them and got up with difficulty. He was worried lest the train should move, that would create additional difficulties for an invalid. A woman with a red token in hand signaled the driver to wait. The invalid somehow gathered his bags, hoisted them and with great difficulty got out, reached a



bench using his crutches, removed his backpack, sat down and closed his eyes. Evidently he was not in any hurry. In a newspaper a journalist argued that only the unsuccessful make use of the subway, since the successful people have auto vehicles and never go underground. Having a Jeep was an issue of the image. Every businessman strives in the first place to purchase a Jeep, enabling him to divorce from the class of the unsuccessful and the metro riders, to specify his place in society.

Before coming on the fixed-route taxi, he entered a supermarket despite a warning from Garnik not to go to expensive stores. He had to buy a toothbrush. Two boys unhurriedly observed and talked. He was silently waiting for them to stop, all the more so that one of them was drunk. It was he who moved to his side and said:

-Why are you looking at me, leave me alone.

-I am not looking at you, said Ben, - I am waiting for you to move aside, must take something out of that place.

-Look at him, getting into my pockets.

-Are you stupid, or what is it? - asked Benjamin, although he did not want to get engaged with a drunk.

-That bum is assaulting me, jostling my pocket, complained the drunk to his companion.

The abuse was smothering Benjamin. He understood the situation with those Armenians who have been under attack by the skinheads. Meanwhile, at the stop there was a huge queue. Is this also related to the category of failures? This time without waiting in the queue he squeezed into the fix-run taxi. When the vehicle started, one with a bass voice endlessly spoke on his cellular phone, in a way that only a teacher could talk to her colleague after lessons. For an hour she spoke with a colleague, then for half-an-hour she spoke meaninglessly with a woman without letting her partner to say a word. So, it was like killing the time at the expense of the passengers' patience, especially when the vehicle stopped at the railroad crossing. While she was pulling the leg of not only her party, but also the passengers, two Armenian females appeared in the vehicle.

One of them sat in the opposite seat. The Armenian woman was making nervous movements. She pulled in her lips, pressing her fingers against her face. The nose has been operated upon, it was not exactly the nose for this face. He made sure again that for an Armenian female it is very difficult to find a marriage partner outside the Home Country.

Garnik's mother-in-law came to visit him from Yerevan. So, he moved to the country house of Kamo the businessman from Kusapat, where on the second floor he was given a big separate room. Although the renovation work has been started on the two-floor house, it was convenient here to hold preparations for exhibitions, recordings, in all, everything connected with the thinking process of a writer. Kamo had been renovating the house for the son of his brother Arthur who had died a year before. Once Kamo asked:

-In the basement there is good wine in small barrels, they have brought it from Southern Caucasus, why don't you drink it?

-I didn't know, - said Benjamin, I will certainly follow your advice.

Fetching a bottle of sweet wine, he walked towards Garnik's workshop. Along the way he felt the smell of sour cabbage, as if it were inherited from the old times. First it seemed that the sour cabbage was spilt somewhere around. What of it, it has gone rotten, they dumped it. It would of course be possible to dump it in an uninhabited place. However, when the same smell was felt at other places, it becomes clear that it is the smell of marshlands quite familiar to the inhabitants.

Father and son were passing by. The father was explaining something to the son.

-And the passport? - asked the son.

-Passport, don't worry, we shall buy it.- answered the father.

He thought that for five thousand dollars one could buy any passport. Thousands of illegal immigrants wanting to settle in Moscow, know that for getting the citizenship or passport there is no other way but bribing. Meanwhile, the officials are being enriched through those easy incomes. Russia, as a matter of fact, is smothered by widespread corruption. See, Garnik's child

of school age is not allowed to attend school without a doctor's reference for the missed classes. The child's mother Anna is demanding, asking the teacher, with no result. Crying doesn't help, either. The outpatient clinic's head doctor refused. Garnik is laughing.

This place is not where they resolve problems in this way.

-So, you go and take, said Anna through tears, - I cannot.

On the next day Garnik goes, hands 500 rubles to the doctor to get the required paper.

No doubt, an overgrown bureaucracy, fathering corruption, is a massive source of wealth, while for the metro-riding "failures" that is a real plague.

He was thinking about it all, when a sound hit Ben on the ear. A woman in green was shouting into a bull horn:

-Good merchandise, cheap, almost free of charge, visit our store.

Benjamin entered the workshop. A young woman with a child entered behind him, and took six pairs of shoes out of her bag.

-You should have come earlier, - said Garnik, - when you come, the orders are flying.

-Thank you for linking my presence to the abundance of orders, - said Benjamin, - however the basic reason is the high quality of your work and also low prices.

A sharp sound was heard near the window from without. There was no idea at all what language it was.

-What is it, do they talk Chechen through the public address system, - asked Benjamin.

-No, why don't you say Georgian - answered Garnik. - it is Russian.

Of course, in Moscow there can be no Chechen or Georgian for political reasons.

An elderly man came into the workshop, seizing the chair put up in front of Garnik, examined the shoes, then after some remarks took up a couple of tall boots, started to fragment them with movements of a trained, skilled shoemaker.

-It is clear that you have been doing well already, come on,

take your permanent place, and start working, - said Garnik.

Well, if I were healthy and care-free, I would come and do my favorite job, answered the shoemaker Hacob from Gyumri. - Besides, you have no place, three points are occupied, aren't they?

-At one point there is Levon, having not a single client during the day, unable to pay the rent.

-At another point that Yerevan man, he is a good craftsman, isn't he?

-But no money either, I have caught him a few times for skimming.

-From the time of the Soviets we had a habit of doing that, in this way the general defect of low salary becomes not too visible.

-Well, a shoemaker cannot go without it, - said Hacob with a cunning smile.

-But I cannot pay for the place, nor can I pay his share, said Garnik, - either I must close the joint or boot him. I have to at least pay for the expendable materials.

-Yes, Samwel was given a boot at several places for this type of behavior.

-I cannot bear dishonesty in business, - said Garnik, - You know Misha, my friend, don't you, has a store in Dolgoprudni, a whole family works for him. It turned out later that that Yerevan family would secretly bring meat there and sell it, while the store's grub remained and went rotten. Finally, everything came to light.

-There is a great difference between the old and the new times, - said Hagob, - In my house in Gyumri there was a mob of 35 people living at the same time. Four sisters-in-law living together in peace and quiet, no arguing, no conflict. Mother would say: Hush, I will show you the hell! When mother died, everything went to rack and ruin. Now there are two of us at home. Three day ago my wife fell out of the window while hanging the window panes, and broke her leg.

-Does your daughter-in-law cook the dinner?

-Eh, she is Russian, damn all.

-Is there a difference between an Armenian and a Russian in-law?

-I got no Armenian in-laws, all Russians. My elder son was well-to-do, everything was going on OK at home, but when he got older, the gains went down, his wife kicked him out. I don't need you, your likes are teeming in Moscow. Eh, I am all sunk in calamity.

Benjamin spoke about the drunk he met in a supermarket and about the insult.

-Be careful, - said Garnik, -while walking the Dolgoprudni at night one came up: "got a fag?", I say "I don't smoke". Another one hit me from behind with a metal bar. I tilted my head in time, but it brushed on my temple. Do you see a scar? Another one assaulted on the backside, I avoided. In fact, I was assaulted three times.

- Have the attacks stopped now?

-When they receive an order, they will renew the attacks, said Garnik, - Yes, Benjamin, that woman came after you. She says they await you at her home.

Ben was already fully aware of the situation he was in. If he showed a sign of life, the wolf will cut his throat and smother him. But Ben has one more hope left to him, that the devil is watching him and will not let this beast kill him. It is possible that he will get into the wolf and subject him to further suffering. The wolf trailed one leg. He felt sharp pain in his body. Breathing was very difficult. Each gulp of oxygen coming into his body caused a sharp pain. Perhaps a rib was pressing on the lungs. That meant he was breathing. Perhaps it was he, Benjamin in his whole incapacity.

Ben heard a long howl. The pack of wolves, surrounding him and was going to attack him, retreated. Ben saw a man wrapped up in skins, who without paying attention to the wolves from the heap of skins on the sled took out a clapper and a tambourine, came up, circled around Ben, and with an angry growl upwards, towards the sun, through the lot-casting clapper. One of the wolves hurled himself at the clapper, hunted it with his jaw, heavy tail obediently pressing between his hind legs, brought it

close to Shaman. The latter gave a momentary look, decided that fell on the side of the fur, that is the lot fell in Ben's favor. Shaman gathered some wood from the ground, piled it up and kindled it with a lighter, then he fanned it by blowing and it flared up. Then he brought pieces of wood from the sled, that he had probably gathered for home or for rituals, carefully arranged them in the fire. The wolves formed a semi-circle at five meters from the fire like boy scouts on an excursion, followed the movements of Shaman with great attention. The man threw some seeds into the fire, then poured some oil. When the fire flared showing crests of flame, the Shaman beat the head-mounted drum with his palm. He started slowly, then quickened the blows. At the same time he composed his song, and in the snowy silence between the beats of the sounding drum was saying the words of the song. Ben thought that the words must be understood by the wolves. That was a tune whereof the words' meaning were unimportant. The tune will soak into the listener, whether man or wolf, into the soul, turning it upside down, at the same time persuading the wounded man to gather, to focus all his inner energy, and with his song to sum it up, pinpointing the energy at speedy recovery. In the course of that action the wolves moved, started to leap around, playing with one another. Ben, too, experienced some feeling of lightness inside, a desire to stand up on his feet, to go dancing with the wolves. However, again feeling a sharp pain in the body gritted his teeth not to shout, not to interfere with the Shaman or with the wolves. The Shaman started to revolve around his axis, shoot up into the air, whirl again. His rotation was done at such a speed that all was whirling around in Ben's eyes. It was seen that the Shaman had already moved into the world of souls, for his eyes were popping out, and there was foam at the lips. The Shaman lay down prostrate on the snow, facing the sky. Then slowly he turned towards Ben, looking at him with surprise, as if having come back from another world, and gradually coming to, could see what had been going on, and smiled at him. After a little rest he rose slowly, removed the skin coat, covered Ben, and pulling him at his armpits tossed him on the sled, and

shouting “Hrrr...” set the deer going.

The sled took off. The man paid no attention to the wolves which followed with bitterness their daily feed being taken away on the sled. Ben understood that they knew the Shaman. There was a tacit agreement between the wolves and the Shaman: never mutually interfere. In the beginning the gang of wolves used to freely submerge into the smell of deer doing their sinister hunting. But when the Northern people had the new leader and the Shaman, the days for the wolves became harder. A few wolves were killed against each tattered deer. For several months the wolves tried to set up a trap for the new leader. The man always previewed the wolves’ steps, acted in advance and always won. And when the gang’s leader fell in the brutal struggle, the wolves resigned themselves to the man’s existence. They accepted his rules of the game.

Benjamin returned to his abode, drank a few gulps of wine, but could not sleep. Garnik had given him a small car TV-set to watch the news. A tiny spider appeared on the nickel-coated antenna. It went up on a thin plank. It was going up in steps, climbing and stopping to listen. Alighting on the TV, it extended its leg, checked on the screen, disliked the smooth surface, drew back, found an opening, got in, suddenly there was a low sound, it leaped out, slid up in terror and stopped on a plastic bolt at the end. Then started to weave. It sorted out that it was not the place, eventually, how will it survive, no flies, no ants... In the early morning it seemed to Benjamin that he had seen a spider hanging from the end of the antenna. He switched on the light. No spider. Of course, he needed to think in the dark, to gather his thoughts, to weigh the good and the bad sides of that house, lest occasionally the refuge of the devil placed in this apartment should be an unpromising location... Who knows what he can write against the spiders? One day they might read his writing and decide to annihilate all spiders. Of course, the fleecy and poisonous spiders remorselessly consuming their like are subject to obliteration. Perhaps it is one of the unintelligible ones that is going around its own business. No, this is an unpromising place, it is better to flee from this room, in a corner

of a huge house a spider keeps its private place, though it may never catch anything, what prey could there be in the middle of winter, it is better to get into a warm corner and find a nest for the winter.

Benjamin saw from the window in the morning that Katerina of Kharkov, working at Kamo's bar with her husband, before going to work asked a Uzbek worker to keep a dog's puppy, he got out and left rapidly. A three-month-old shepherd-dog puppy got ill, and Katerina nursed it for a few months. The dog got attached to Katerina, and left her every morning with difficulty. When Katerina got far enough, the worker let the dog go. The dog, wagging its head left and right, came up to Benjamin, rubbing against his feet, remembered something and made it for the gate, sliding under it, hit the road. The Uzbek hit his knees with his hands and said:

- It is gone.

-It is OK, reassured him Benjamin, - it will come back, unless of course run over by a car.

In the age of auto vehicles what is going on is a strange selection of dogs. The brainless dogs that understand nothing, perish, while those with some intelligence, don't get run over. Probably, their generations also inherit this type of intelligence, so that the whole species of dogs becomes intelligent and well-oriented.

On the next moment he saw a puppy lying on the road. It got into the street for the first time and was run over. It ran. A boy held the dog and took it out of the flow of speeding vehicles. A woman nearby was weeping. It was Katerina. The dog was hit on the chest, an open wound spluttered blood. It looked at Benjamin, eyes wide open.

-I told the Uzbek not to let it go...- said Katerina through tears.

- It went after you like mad.

-When it was sick, I nursed it so many months, we got attached to each other... I don't know if we could rush it to a hospital for an operation.

A red Mercedes stopped, a dressed up woman came out,



examined it and said:

-OK, I will sew up the chest, come into my car.

Benjamin decided not to go to the stop immediately. He walked in an alley. The trees were scattered. So, the garden was a rescued area of a forest, rather than a planted garden. He thought that where it is now Moscow, eight hundred years ago there was forest, by gradually cutting and developing, people eliminated the forests, but certain areas were rescued and became gardens. I don't know why, but the giant Russian flat land, as a result of the awaiting disaster on the planet Earth, as 12 thousand years ago, will again be filled with the ocean water, leaving all this civilization below the salt water, and 11 thousand years later there will appear the Russians again and will start developing marshlands... All of a sudden the singing sounds went all around, and Benjamin was filled with domestic feelings. Evidently, the birds were deceived by the unusual winter weather, and they thought that it was the coming of spring.

Eventually, Benjamin decided to go to the address given by the woman from the building's administration. The gate opened with a grinding sound, and he entered. It was a wooden house black from old age, with a pair of decorated windows. He knocked at the door. A woman's voice, as old as the house, called from the inside:

-Come in. -Like the wooden house, an old wrinkled woman was sitting in a rocking chair. In the same voice she cried: - Akhshenia, you have visitors.

So, she had known about him in advance.

Benjamin examined the house. Ashkhen's portraits on the walls. "So, Ashkhen had been hiding in this house from Kojgo' persecutions. On one of the photos Ashkhen was with a girl. On a small photo was himself with Ashkhen. However he had never posed for a photo with Ashkhen, or rather, they never got to the point of taking pictures, since their love was short. Ashkhen joined the two pictures, and framed it.

Benjamin turned around and was dumbfounded. Standing in front of him was Ashkhen, his love and his dream.

-A-a-shkhen, - said Benjamin in a fluttering voice.

-No, she is not Ashkhen, - said the house-resembling old hag.

A short-time miraculous smile appeared on the girl's face and vanished. She said:

-I am Ashkhen's daughter.

-Good Lord...

-Yes, Mother told me when you worry, you say "Good Lord!"

-Has it been your house?

-Yes. The logs protected us from cold..

-But why is there no father's picture on the wall?

-My father died early, as to the photo, he didn't make it, rather his house was burned with him, we moved to this hut with my grandmother.

-Good Lord... Had I known, I would have helped.

-Mother was afraid brother should know where we were staying.

-How did you find me? - asked Benjamin.

-Ben told about you.

-Ben is me.

-No, you are Benjamin, while Ben is another entity.

-There is also another type inside me. I always feel someone's presence. As if someone has been drawn from within me... I had experienced this feeling in the United States, when at Lavey's house the devil came inside me. Since that day I have been sort of halved. The writing ability has been retained, very little, the rest is gone.

-I know, - said the girl with a meaning.

-Again it was Ben who said it.

-No, he said nothing, but I knew it for sure.

Benjamin looked at the girl steadily with a doubt. She is an exact copy of Ashkhen, the same body, the same beautiful face, smile, gait, - thought Benjamin. A sudden chill ran through Benjamin's body.

-What can I do to help you now?

-Ben was lost, -said the girl, and he is in danger. No inner feeling is there to signal of what has become of him.

-The feeling, yes, it is there, the feeling of loss, my troubles

started to become more frequent. As if I've moved into the cold. With every step there is a trap playing with the destiny, subjecting me to hard trials. It seems as if my guardian angel has taken leave.

-Do you know why you have come to Moscow?

Eh, I know nothing for quite a long time. There is one idea, and I am prisoner to that idea.

-I understand. What about dreams, do they say nothing?

-The dreams have become white. Everything is white, like a wide-spread snow cover.

-Did you say snow?

-Yes, when watching this dream I really get frozen. I also see wolf's jaws, people in animal skins...

-Tundra, Korek... He has received a special assignment. Wait, I will check in the computer, what nations habitate the Northern direction.

The girl opened a small computer, pressed some keys and it started talking.

-Korek, Korek, Orok, it is interesting, so, they took him to the country of the Oroks.

-Where is that? - asked Benjamin.

-The Oroks are on the North of Sakhalin, in the tundra, in the different corners of taiga, having no permanent place. They remain in minute numbers and are vanishing. The International development consumes this type of peoples along with their cultures. I see. They want to rescue this tribe with the help of Ben.

- How can Ben rescue them?

-I cannot imagine, said the girl in despair.

-Why don't you tell me your name?

-Ashkhen.

But it is the name of your mother.

-After her death they called me Ashkhen. Ben, too, has accepted this name.

-Ben...- said Benjamin thoughtfully, - when you talk about him, your voice is filled with tremor. You love him.

-Maybe..., - said Ashkhen, then added, - Mr. Benjamin,

please, if you notice any sign, or see a dream, tell me. Ben needs help, we must find him and help him.

-But the devil, who had entered and split me, doesn't he help him?

-So, he abandoned him and gives no more help, - cut in Ashkhen.

-Perhaps you take on Hovik's case, - said Ben, - the first testimony he wrote without a lawyer, or rather it was demanded by the lawyer, it was not admitted, they made him compile his text using their data. They promised to let him go next morning if he wrote what they prompted. Then the policemen laughed over the boys naivety.

-I know about the search in Hovik's apartment. In Hovik's evidence it was written that there had been a sum of \$3500 in the cabinet. The sum being not there, your wife and daughter was threatened with opening a new case accusing them of theft, your relatives then had to bring Hovik's money for the sold car from his Davtashen apartment and to give it to the police official conducting the search, but they presented it as an attempt at bribery.

-Is it possible that Hovik write a new statement, of course, in the presence of a lawyer?

-The investigator of the security service suggested to wait a little more, said Ashkhen, - until they decide, what they can do to mitigate the situation with Hovik, of course, against some money. They promised to inform about everything in a few days. I think we must wait.

- Who is connected with the case?

-Deputy Chief of the Service and the prosecutor.

- Are they going to share the money?

-Must be so. However, they are worried by the appearance of Benjamin. They are apprehensive of him as a public speaker.

-Will it help the procedure?

-It may be both ways.

-Can I again see you here?

-This place is convenient.

-In that world too, you could not get severed from your

mother, said Benjamin going out of the wooden hut.

A bus and a subway train are convenient environment to recall the past days and to put them down in writing. He also recorded the encounter with Ashkhen in detail and the disappearance of Ben. He went to see Grigor Eritsian, Director General of the “Slavo” Publishers. A few days before he brought a hundred books which showed his purchasing capacity. After printing the book, the next problem for an author is to sell it. This time the publisher decided to help the author as far as he could. He got acquainted with Grigor eight years before, when he was publishing his “Secrets of Gandzak-Kirovabad and Northern Artsakh” book. When he was shown the printed copy of the book, the Grigor said that he was sorry he was not the publisher of the book, since he was from Gandzak. And now Grigor summoned Benjamin to hand in the fee.

-What books are you publishing now, - asked Benjamin, for he was aware of the difficult problem of publishing books for the Moscow publishers.

-My storerooms are being overfilled with books, - said Grigor, then continued, - dozens of publishers have gone bust. I only publish very expensive books, of a hundred to two hundred circulation. E.g. I was visited by German organizers, I showed them an old album of church buildings. They ordered publication of a similar book immediately. One copy of the book is priced at five thousand Euro. Ten years later that will cost more. But I want to have another conversation with you. I want to share something with you. I have recently been in Jerusalem. In the Armenian Church I suggested to the priest to create a book “The Memorial”. That is a book wherein any person will be able to buy a privilege at a low price to write a memorial letter to his generation. The letter will have a code, and will change after writing. He can pass the code to one of his generation. Say, my grandson will come fifty years later, open it, read it, and write his letter to next heirs. I suggested that this type of book should be created and kept in the church. But the clergy say that the issue has a legal problem, and in Jerusalem it would be hard to adjust.

-I would suggest to place a book like that in Echmiadzin, -

said the writer, - I think that the Patriarch will understand and will accept the offer.

-The book's paper is a special material prepared using Chinese technology. Its paper will last for a thousand plus years. The ordinary book paper cannot last long. I want this book to afford the opportunity to people of any confession, nation, sex, or profession. The location of this memorial must become a sanctity.

-Is it you who is going to publish that book?

-Yes, the copyright will belong to my family. My son will be the publisher after me. Grandmother of my grandmother is a famous healer; therefore our tribe is called the Healings.

-What about ink?

-Chinese ink is the most durable, - answered Grigor, then came over to Benjamin's books, - I decided to help you a little, it is my duty to do so. I will distribute your books among my friends...

At an agreed hour he reached the subway station. At the entrance he met Ruben's wife Gayane, walked to their home together. Gayane was from Gyumri. She was currently with a mission in Moscow to search and find restaurants that would buy the "Areni" wine products. When the agreements with the restaurants have been concluded in sufficient numbers the Armenian businessman declared that he would transfer those areas to another person. With Nikolai Kalinkin they had done the same thing, he knew him since they were in the Karabakh Movement together. He used to cooperate with the Moscow-based Karabakh intellectuals, writing articles in Moscow papers on the Karabakh Movement. If alienating an area from Gayane was difficult for a businessman, to take away a territory from Nikolai would cost nothing. That is a bunco style of work quite accepted in Yerevan, the public in Moscow has yet to learn it.

In the Esenin park a man is down.

-He is drunk, - said Benjamin.

-No, said Gayane, - he is with a dog. Might be a heart attack.

Gayane tried to approach, but the dog started to growl. He called the police and the ambulance, and decided to wait until

they arrived.

Benjamin entered a store to buy wine and sweets. He got out of the store, with Gayane leading the way. He said that he did not leave the dog with the policemen. At that moment the man awoke from sleep, raised his head.

-Are you not too well? - asked Gayane.

-No, not at all, mumbled the man.

-Have you been drinking, - asked the policeman.

-Are you sick?

-No.

-Why did you fall down?

- I don't know.

Then the wife came and took her husband away who had secretly drunk more.

Gayane's father Vanik Muradyan, a former engine-driver from Gyumri, was known in Armenia for his skill in preparing different models from foam plastic. People from Gyumri used to come to his courtyard to see his plastic train model roll on rails. The train inside showed no difference from a real train. There was a fountain and lights in the middle. The model of the Echmiadzin Temple so attracted the attention of the Armenian Patriarch that he wished to buy it. He wanted to make a gift of it to the Temple, but the Patriarch's representatives paid him \$1000 with regard to the express wish of the Patriarch.

-In 1961, I made a three-stage rocket, like the one used for Gagarin's space-flight, out of shot-gun cartridge cases, told the former engine-driver. -the rocket took off into the air, and when all fuel was burnt, it descended by parachute.

-You had also prepared a phaeton from foam plastic, hadn't you, - I said.

-Yes, but the phaeton was broken by strangers.

-Now father, sitting from morning till night, never leaves home, - said Gayane.

-Why?

-He is afraid of the skinheads, said Ruben.

-Of course, I don't want to become a victim of bums, - said Vanik Muradian, - eh, I miss Gyumri.

-But they assault only young Armenians, - I said.

-As far as I know, they make no difference between the young and the old.

In this here garden place Ruben escorted Benjamin to the metro station. In an alleyway they were being fast approached by a shouting and raving group of youngsters. Ruben felt tension. They passed by the Armenians. Schoolchildren. At that moment there was a telephone call from Hovannes, Benjamin's son. There was some disruption in communication, and Benjamin was compelled to fill the evening air with the sounds of the Armenian speech. In March 1988 in Sumgait, where he went to take pictures, his companion, Seiran from Sumgait, had always given a warning not to talk Armenian in full voice, it was dangerous...

Ben opened his eyes and saw a hole in the roof. He felt the breath of the taiga. The cold wind touching upon the tops of trees, reached the cone-shaped homes of the Oroks, getting inside through the chimneys. A patch of leather, that remained hanging on the wall of a dwelling clapping perpetually as if telling the story of the wind. The impacts of skin were now stronger and now weaker. Ben thought that in taiga the wind also moved in waves.

Tried to remember and to guess, where he is located. Everything reminded of a cone-shaped yurt. His gaze wandered slowly along the walls of the tent. Hanging on the wall were a tambourine and a clapper, a rattle, a bundle of grass, stuffed birds and animals, among which the outstanding were heads of a deer with giant horns and a wolf. The tent was divided into two parts with the colored skins. The lap of the curtain went back for a moment and the laughing face of a girl shortly appeared and rapidly withdrew. Her whole face was covered with round-shaped full cheeks, while almond-shaped eyes and a small nose were of secondary importance on the face. Ben thought about the Siberian peoples. He was sorry that he had learnt so little about them. A huge man with broad shoulders came in bringing in the Siberian cold. His protruding cheek bones and narrow eyes seemed familiar. He dimly remembered the wolf's snout,



and then the man in a skin, the thunder of tambourine, the crazy dance of man around the fire.

Shaman, - whispered Ben.

The man bent towards Ben putting his ear to Ben's lips. His strength to speak failed. He did it again.

-Shaman- he tried to smile, but he felt a sharp pain in his chest.

The man smiled.

-I am the shaman, and I will cure you. Can you say, who you are? I saw you fall from the sky. I saw Ard, the spirit that cast you down. He had the head of a bear, the body of a man and the wings of an eagle. Enget bude, beyi ekwi bude. I don't get it, man "One who is not destined to die, will not die". Said about you. So, by the order of Aid I will treat you now. I am Oiogr, the leader of the Oroks and the Chief Shaman. Do you know who is the Orok? He is the leader of the Marals, do you know the deer? I will treat you with the horn powder of a one-year old deer, I will put you on your feet in a few days, when you tell your doctors, they will disbelieve. Ogdo, Ogdo, he called, when the same laughing face appeared, ordered: quick, prepare bear's fat, tell your sisters to bring the Shaman's attire.

He opened carefully Ben's breast, oiled it, pressed down softly, plunged his fingers under his spinal cord for a moment and pulled them back. Ben stiffened with pain. Oiogr's daughter flattened the lump of bear's fat, put it on his chest, fastened it with a leather belt, and started to do the Shaman's work. For one moment he noticed that Ben came to himself and was following him.

-Who are you, - asked Oiogr, - at the time of the ritual the Shaman must make your name known to the souls, otherwise the cure will fail. I must remove the evil spirits from your inside and send them away. Your name.

Ben remembered the order of the Members of the Assembly.

-Korek, I am Korek, - gathering his strength, breathed out Ben.

-Orok, are you Orok? - asked the Shaman, - I saw you go down from heaven. There was nothing up there, no aircraft, nor

a balloon, nor a chopper, not even a parachute. True, you look like a man from the Caucasus. Georgian? Armenian? But you are an Orok, you are sent by God, so you are ours, he sent you to multiply our tribe. There are only girls left in the jurts, the boys are in the cities, taking on alien girls...

With his gaze, Ben wandered on the walls of the tent. Shaman, following his gaze, explained the meanings of things.

Shaman's tent is formed as Dulin Buga or the Middle World, populated by people. Ugu Buga is the Low World. From the tent entrance toward the West is Khergu Buga or the Lower World that is prepared from dead wood. While the East side is Darpe, prepared from kuen wood. On the two sides of Darpej are kuen-trees with the roots up. They are the trees of Shaman's Top World. On the opposite side is an onang-tree in the spiritual corner of the tabernacle called nelget, roots down. Placed at the spiritual level among the stems of the kuen-tree are sculptures of Shaman's ancestors: bear, deer, and other animals, guarding the entrance of the tent. Placed in the Onang are wooden images of geese, ducks, guarding the tribe's road to the Inner World. That is terminated by a sculpture of a Mugdende man armed with a spear. Hanging on a kuen-tree are sacrificial animals made of wood: a deer skin and colored tissues. Red and white are for the taiga's souls, black are for the Inner World Souls.

Shaman, sitting on a floor mat thoughtfully, slowly rocking from side to side, is demonstratively yawning. Oiogir rapidly opens his mouth as if trying to catch something.

The Shaman poured ash on the stone slab, then put on hot coals covered it with dry branches, blew, stirred, until smoke appeared, added flour, oil, fat to the fire. When the smoke reached the chimney, Ogden, who was the Shaman's assistant, slowly turned his tambourine in the puffs of smoke. The Shaman, keeping his legs in the smoke one by one, covered his shoes with smoke, then, stooping towards the smoke with his body, rubbed his body, when he wetted, he came out of the puffs of smoke, having checked that everything is clear, he has gathered enough strength, prior to the brutal fight against the

evil forces, started the traditional shamanistic ritual. He straightened and spread his arms, clucking like a sitting hen:

Kook, kook, kook...

That was a call directed at other members of the tribe. Through the Ugdup pass left in Darpe were the Shaman's girls crawling in one after another. That is the displacement of the Om's soul from the tribal grounds to the Middle World Doolin Buga. The girls sat kneeling on the mat: They conversed in low voices, jested and giggled. The Shaman went on rocking. Ogden rose from his place, brought a cloak, a bra, a hat with deer horns, a silver belt, helped the Shaman to put it on. Then he heated up the fire, heating up the clapper and the drum, then served it to the Shaman. Oigir took up the drum with his left hand, went down to the left knee, beat with a clapper. Everybody is mum. Coming from the darkness there were sounds of rhythmic beats of the tambourine, while Oiogir was singing and rocking.

*O, my next of kin,  
my nation, blood, the spirit of my heart,  
It is for you, my sadness and my strokes of tambourine,  
He'he~i, He'he~i, He'he~i,  
He'he~l, He'he~l, He'he~i...  
The girls sang in a single voice.  
He'he~l, He'he~l, He'he~l,  
He'he~l, He'he~l, He'he~l...*

He beat the tambourine, leaped on the right leg three times around the fire, then three times on the left leg in the opposite direction. Under the sounds of the tambourine, the Shaman would give out a cuckoo sound, now like a crow, now like a wolf. The girls came and were standing in the tent corner with a shaggy carpet on the floor. Oigir addressed the souls, started talking to them.

-The Agd, who live on an island, rule the souls of the seas, the animals, the fishes, when you go to your wife, the Mistress of the Waters, think about us, now, too, help to cure Orok, the man sent by Seveki. Baha Frog, who took out the soil from the bottom of the water and keep it at the surface of the water, keep

watch on my tent, multiply my tribe, which is fading out. Most gigantic Buga, you are the first, the greatest, yours are all the powers of nature, the Taiga, man, Through the Polar Star opening cast your gaze towards the earth of the Oroks, multiply the herds of the deer. O, Buga, the Giant Cat, when you descend on the Earth, step cautiously, lest the ground would shake, the tents and jurts of man should not break down. The dear Mugde of the Oroks, who are the soul of the dead and who live in the Buni world, again protect us from the evil spirits. If the new Orok who fell from heaven is appropriate, support me, since my four sons refused to become deer breeders, plunged into the cities for the pleasure of foreign women. Dunne-dunne Musoon, the Mistress of the Taiga, the soul of our tribe, accept the Orok descended from Heaven, let him go hunting. Mani, the greatest of the hunters, strike the deer stealing the sun. I am calling you, Kaldiamia, the soul of the rivers and mountains, you have supported me since the day I was born, help drive away pain and disease from my tent, cure the wounds of the new Orok, make him a full member of my family. Omi, Omi, can you hear me, prepare, since my daughters soon will bear children. Enter them and give them souls, as you did with my wife Ondari, giving life to her nine children.

Having finished the conversation with the spirits, Shaman exclaimed:

-Ogdo, beautiful Ogdo, take the scissors and cut out the "Image of Disease" that is torturing the Orok who descended to help us. Let him become mighty and strong, to multiply our tribe.

Ogdo with smart movements carved with scissors the figures of horsemen representing evil spirits, pasting patches of different colors. The ready-made evil spirits were then fixed on a special board, and kept above the head as an image of the disease. Ogdo started to prepare food for the spirits, which was a significant part of the ritual. That was a cut-out piece of canvas, with old cooked chunks of meat around a raw piece of meat. A girl, the spirits' food in one hand, the other one hoisting, made three circles above Ben-Orok head. Subsequently the patient was washed by a smoking dish of the Arazhan holy

water, so that the drops of the liquid should spill upon the “image of the disease” held beneath. Arazhan is a mixture of water and milk. It is prohibited to spill the Arazhan on the floor. The drops on Ben’s hands should be swept upon the paper on the board with affixed horsemen and spirit food. Then Ogdo, holding high the food, took it out and walked in the direction shown by the Shaman, carrying away the “image of the disease”. That means that the spirits of disease, seduced by the smell of the delicious food, are removed from the tent.

After the Shaman’s ritual, Ben struggled fatefully in the tent against death. Oigir’s girls took turns in nursing Ben. On the next morning Oigir opened the leather door of the tent and said:

-Geven samche.

Ben, who woke up, looked at Oigir interrogatively and breathed out:

-Ge-ven sam-che.

-Yes, remember, in our language, and also in your language, that means: in the morning a star died.

-Good morning, - answered Ben in Armenian.

-Good morning, - said Oigir and smiled, - the Orok says: toogo doogo oojin, remember, life is endless, so you must have children, lest life should die. Our spirits said that you are the chosen of our tribe.

-I am still sick, whispered Ben.

-I know, but the spirits will give you strength and energy, you will get well. You will eat cakes of deer horn flour, your bones will get hard, and you will be OK. I will not give my girls to another one, they must ensure the survival of the tribe.

-I am not big enough for that.

-No, you have an extraordinary energy. No young man can compete with you in this sense. You are the choice of our spirits. My soul was roaming in heaven, when an evil spirit departed from you and hurried to some place.

-But you abandoned me to the wolves.

-You seemed dead, then the spirit informed that you were alive, they had to be urgently contacted, to save you. The spirits made you member of our tribe, ordering me to teach you

shamanism. You must become the greatest Shaman, greater than the Supreme Shaman Mongush Qenin-Lopsan, who allegedly in 2002 prevented drought and saved the Earth with rain. Binaduk tulili khuruges? How can I explain to you all that is surrounding you, lest you should go to another place. Well, I commit you to the girls. I will go and drive the deer to the taiga, maybe they find something to eat. If you are lucky enough to come across some game, my speedy arrow will bring it down.

-Have you no rifle? - asked Ben.

-I got a double-barrel, however I promised the spirits to hunt using bow and arrows. -Ben smiled. The Shaman continued,

- I am afraid the spirits in the Taiga will boycott me. And if I stop intermediating between my people and the spirit, we shall be lost. Do you know why are people on the point of extinction?

-I don't.

-Because under the Soviets they persecuted the Shamans, and the link with the spirits was broken. It is our way of life. You cannot eradicate that from the Nation. That is the way a nation is killed. If we adopt a European way of life, we shall be lost.

Ogir, taking along the arrows and bow needed for the hunt, as well as a long spear, left. The girls came out to see him off. Ben heard the sounds of the departing herd. The girls came in giggling, casting ambiguous gazes on Ben lying motionlessly in bed, stepped into another room. Soon entered Ogdo with a breakfast for Ben. He poured deer milk in a coffee cup. Ben grated some burnt deer meat into the horn flour.

-Duktemi, - said Ogdo.

Ben paid attention to his festive attire. Suspended from different parts of his jacket, were multicolored necklaces. Parramatta on the forehead and in the ears added a special luxury to Ogdo's smiling face. Ogdo carefully brought a piece of meat dusted with horn flower to Ben's lips. A girl's fingers touched Ben's lips. A tremor passed through the girl's body. Ben held the girl's hand. Ben ate a morsel of meat, then drank some milk. Ogdo undressed silently, came under Ben's blanket, leaned against him with her entire body. She was trembling, for Ben was her first man ever. Ben received her, whispering:

-Ashkhen, my dear Ashkhen...

-No, say Ogdo, dear Ogdo...- whispered the girl, - so, I remind you of your love, do you feel good with me? I was afraid you would not take me.

-Ogdo, beautiful Ogdo, it is good with you.

Ogdo was a source of stormy passion, a raging fire. While Ben's passion was going stronger, for he dedicated his strength and energy to an Orok-woman.

For a moment the hem of the partition slid aside showing the face of the elder sister Diente. Then came the heads of the other sisters.

-Ogdo, what about me, - said Diente, - let us change places.

-No, Diente, - said Ogdo out of breath, pulling back the leather cover, - no, tomorrow, now don't interfere.

"In this world of snow, how do they get such a lot of fire? - thought Ben. For a moment Ben's attention was attracted by Ogdo's elegant fingers. He remembered that he had never looked at Ashkhen's fingers, he couldn't say whether they were beautiful or not... But maybe there was no second Ashkhen. He assumed his real and lost Ashkhen, his soul was enveloped in Ashkhen's body and rehabilitated his love, his feelings in their entire depth, giving freedom to his passions. So, Ashkhen was a tale, the love of Jraberd and pleasure. Ben touched Ogdo's naked body. It was more than real. But is he there? He had impregnated Ogdo, and by the decision of the spirit of the Oroks had to impregnate her sisters as well, to save the Oroks' tribe from extinction. But is it possible for a single man to have two bodies? Well, he was one, but the other one, Benjamin, was an illusion, a formal thing in the earthly world, who can only record what he can see, nothing more.

On a Sunday morning Benjamin, on coming out of the 1905 Metro station saw a man with disheveled hair lying in the street. No one approached. He was motionless. It was such an ordinary case, a man lying in the street, that many are surprised at Benjamin's surprise. He curled up because of cold. The asphalt was very cold.. He was another heir of the human kind, but he was on the ground. And what if it is his second, what is his

name, oh, yes, Ben of course, the corns, Քէն, and he, sent, thrown into this mixture of nations and peoples, and forgotten. As if he has never been. There is no help. They create a chapter with obstacles. Yes, they make up everything, so that he should have something to write about. For who, he did not know himself. He approached the man. It was some drunk.

On the left side of the street leading to the Armenian Church and the graveyard the pointer said: “Gravestones”. He turned there. A thought flashed: “No hurry. Not yet.” A pause for thinking: “They already know what I am going to do, so, I must go on living to that tune. A flitting smile appeared on Benjamin’s face. An oncoming girl looked with doubt. An impression of a madman. He remembered when once in Komitas Street he was going to board a fix-run taxi, when an inner voice said: “Do not board, the vehicle is faulty.” He was surprised and waved it. Having gone fifty meters, the vehicle stopped and the driver declared that it was out of order. Since then he became more attentive to the voice prompting different ideas. He felt in advance that a given day will bring success or failure. Benjamin had never been deceived by those warnings.

He just entered the graveyard area, took pictures of the musicians group, when a wedding party appeared at the entrance. The pipe player’s cheeks puffed up even more. The tambourine got carried away. It seemed that the wedding party had nothing to do with it. The Moscow Armenians have been so cut off the national habits that the national tunes have become alien to them. But the tradition of Christening at Church has remained intact.

Benjamin patiently waited for the leader of the congregation. A man appeared, said he was from Moldova, was in a great hurry, asked to be allowed to jump the queue ahead of Benjamin for an interview with the Bishop, for his business would be over in five minutes. Benjamin did not answer, however the latter addressed the secretary: “This gentleman agreed, I must go in now”. So, he barged in without removing his hat and coat, into the room of the Congregation Leader. He emerged one and a half hours later. A short man appeared in the reception room. He



was escorted by a Russian cameraman and a priest.

-What are you going to film? - asked the priest.

-I am from Greece, - said the short man, who spoke with a Yerevan accent. The subject of the film is my visit to Moscow. In Greece, we have to show that there is Armeniency, the Church, and the Bishop, all are here.

-The Bishop is busy, - said the priest.

-Eh, we shall wait...

The Bishop listened to Benjamin, said that in principle he agreed to open an exhibition in the Armenian House of the Diocese. He advised to write a letter to the Armenian businessmen who could provide assistance to the Foundation.

-One of the Diocese leaders has collected a significant amount of money, - said the Bishop, - I don't think that, particularly the Artsakh businessmen will reject you.

A woman came in, to hand in some souvenirs to the Diocese leader of which the Bishop presented to Benjamin a wooden cross with soil from Jerusalem.

On the way from the graveyard, having not reached the gate, standing on both sides of the path are two statues. One is a man of about fifty, half-turned, looking up, opposite him, sitting on the stone floor, is an angel with the head bowed meekly. The legend on the statue reads: «ОгановВачикСергеевич». Benjamin remembered the year 1998. Valera Babakhanian, a man from Baku, promised to help publish one of the books. The proposition included three names of the books, yet unpublished. Valera called from Moscow, informing that he had found a sponsor, who chose the book about Gandzak, and had already allocated five thousand dollars. Benjamin objected, saying that ten thousand were needed. On the next day he said on the phone that the sponsor agreed, however while advancing his own condition. The book had to contain a colorful portrait of his mother who came from Hadrut. In the process of publishing the book he was informed that the sponsor of his book was Rudik Ohanov, a crime boss from Baku. He was one of the largest authorities in the underworld. It is told that in January 1990 in Baku he and his three brothers stopped an attack of the

Azerbaijani mob on their Armenian-populated area of the city. When Benjamin met his younger brother in Pyatigorsk, the latter spoke with his elder brother on the telephone, who said: "Tell him I am in dire straits now, but when it becomes clear, I will have them print all his books."

Had he stayed alive, Benjamin would not have set foot to Jeleznodorohni, would not have suffered so. He could have also resolved the issue with the exhibition.

He remembered his encounter with crime boss Svoy Raf at Aghkat Armo's restaurant in 1988. He said: "In your world it is war, in our world it is peace". He offered his help. The defenders of Artsakh had to be supplied with ammunition. By his order the ammunition was transported by "his boys" from among the Azeris, who never asked what it was that the Armenians were moving.

On the left side of the passage there was another splendid monument, carrying a legend: "ОгановВачикСергеевич". It was the grave of Rudolf's brother Vachkos, a crime boss.

Ogdo was happy.

-My sisters are as good as me, - said Ogdo on the third day with a happy smile on her face. and remember, you are not only mine.

-Good Lord, am I to love them as well?

-Of course, you are ours, of us all. We decided that all our sisters will have children from the same husband.

-Good lord, I have become a harem host.

Lying in bed, Ogden stared happily above, as if to see something in heaven. At that moment a beautiful bird stood in the direction of the chimney, at the end of the tent pole and started to trill.

-Omi, our son's Omi, Ben, see, the Omi of our son is here, she is talking about our son with a song. Wait nine months. Oh, yes, she will go to a warm country, will come back in spring, and will enter into our son, give him breath and life. You will stay, won't you, Ben, will go nowhere?

-I don't know, my beautiful Ogdo, I know nothing.

Ogdo quietly slipped out of bed. Ben examined her body.

Such a beautiful and smooth body was difficult to imagine. It was as if it were a white sculpture made of snow, animated and gave him as a gift by the Oroks' spirits. Ogdo turned to Ben. She wanted Ben to see and to appreciate her beauty. Ogdo dressed slowly, then taking up the Shaman's tambourine, started dancing, beating with a clapper and singing.

*The Even People*

*In very old times*

*Lived in the mountain,*

*They walked an old path,*

*In this very Taiga*

*Our kids were born.*

*For three days*

*They were ascending,*

*Very long ago*

*Half a ton*

*Hoisted up,*

*Long ago,*

*Very long ago,*

*Mother died in the Taiga.*

Ben ignored the song's words. However, the ringing sounds like pieces of ice, melted in the world around Ogdu and the Oroks, and in their melodious sweetness, harmoniously caressing the objects in the ritual tent, spread upon the successive black-and-white layers of the carpet, introducing Ben to a new sanctified world.

Ben, forgetting his wounds, entered into deep sleep with a happy feeling.

## CHAPTER 13

### FESTIVAL OF THE BEAR

There was no one to help Ben in the arrangement of pictures. It was difficult to maintain direction in the low parts. Hanging the pictures took Ben three days. But it was just those three days that he lacked to distribute the invitations to the appropriate persons. The Information Department of the Embassy promised to dispatch the media and TV crews to the exhibition opening, but did nothing. Further on, the Benjamin's frustration deepened. He was not ready for defeat.

No one of the Church came, although the diocese leader said that he had told four clergy to take part in the occasion, and to say a speech at the opening ceremony. No one attended either from the Media or from the Embassy. Garnik said:

You trust people too easily.

A dancing group staff entered the hall. Their dancing lesson was delayed because of the exhibition. Benjamin read a short sermon to the girls, talking on Shooshee, and on the importance of its recovery, as well as on the network-wide referendum.

-How can one take part in the referendum, - asked one of the girls.

-Everyone can put 20 or 30 rubles into an envelope, write their name and cast it in the letter box. We will display your names on the Foundation's site.

-Why should we take part in the "Shooshee" referendum, we are the Muscovites, we are not interested in Shooshee, said one of the girls.

Benjamin felt how deep the gap was between those people and the Home Country. But they learn the Armenian dances. Well, then, acquisition of the Home Country has to be done through dancing, if possible.

Whenever the Moscow-residing Armenians show indifference to him, Benjamin understands and forgives it, but the indifference to the Home Country or Artsakh can only be forgiven by God...

A fifty-year-old woman looked at the photos and asked:

-You see, it is late, the people have wandered away from the issues of Karabakh and the Home Country. Had you brought this wonderful exhibition here ten years ago...

He felt that he was looked upon as a Don Quixote. If the de la Mancha had aimed his spear at a windmill, then Benjamin would have found himself in an airless environment. There is no support to lean upon, nor any ground to set foot on.

Who is to blame for a widespread indifference of the society? Many say: the authorities. But those so-called authorities result from the public outlook, from the condensed public image. The Ambassador was displeased that the representative of the Karabakh Republic was mentioned in the invitation by name. Anyway, the authorities are apprehensive that the city name of Shooshee will anger the Azeri community of Moscow, and they will rally against the Armenians.

In the middle of the night Ben came out to do number one. The stars have gone brighter, made wider opening windows or cracks towards the light of eternity, towards the World at the Top. The spirits of the Oroks are connected through those cracks with Seveki, the host of the World at the Top, who has created the world, according to the Tunguzes.

All around was the Taiga – silent, but widely spread in the mute world, unbridled, often stormy, cold and terrible. Grazing deer everywhere. What can they find to eat in the frozen Middle World?

Ben remembered the forests of Karabakh. He used to go hunting with uncle Aramais. The uncle cut the branches of apple and pear trees to graft them to the wild apple and pear trees in the forest. Both in summer and winter, you will not stay hungry in the forest of Karabakh. That is an old tradition that the people of Artsakh pass from generation to generation. One moment the silence of night was violated. An unexpected wind filled the taiga with the grinding sounds of trees, or maybe spirits, the bellowing of deer, and the howling of wolves. From the penetrating cold or from fear, Ben rapidly pressed against the warm body of Ogden.

In the morning Ben woke up trying to remember where he

was. Passing before his eyes were the visions of rites, then the smiles of Ogdo, her face beaming happiness, nights filled with passion. There was no one in his part of the tent. He got up quietly. Looked around. Gathered his strength, went out. His eyes were drowned in the whiteness of snow. Cold air invaded the lungs. He turned to the cone-shaped tent. A strange metal image of a beast was hanging above the entrance, that was a mixture of a deer and a fish: two different heads were merging into a deer's body with fins. Ben thought that it was a militant emblem of the Oiogir family. The Shaman's tabernacle was built, or rather, sewn of differently colored leather fragments, making up an original mosaic pattern. Lest the severe winds of the tundra carry the tabernacle away, at one meter from one another, all around the tent they stacked logs in a conically shaped wall, which were joined together with a leather rope above the smoke vent of the tent. The lower parts of the logs were submerged in the snow.

On the branches of a fir tree close to the tent there were ribbons of colored tissues. Probably, the place was frequented by the Oroks from the surrounding area, who transfer their difficulties and diseases to the tree by means of those ribbons. Suspended from the branches of the tree were legs of the deer. He remembered the giant two-thousand-year-old plane tree of Karabakh with the legs of the sheep hanging from the branches. Later the authorities banned that sacrificial rite; the millennia-old pagan habits were outlawed.

For a moment it seemed that the surrounding world turned around. It seemed to Ben that at that moment Ogdo entered under his arm to help him walk. Ben understood that through the tabernacle opening his mistress was following him ready to help.

-Sorry Ogdo, my mind has not yet been fully recovered.

-No, you are very strong. Just you have lost a lot of strength.

-What sign is it at the top of the entrance?

-Seli? He is the guardian of our tribe, said Ogdo. -Ben, you were calling "Ashken" all the time...

-Do you want to know everything? - Ben looked at Ogdo.

-Yes, it is important. I have to communicate to the spirit of Om, he will award the child to us.

-The name is Ashkhen.

-Female?

-Yes. I love her.

-Now too?

-Yes.

-Haven't you seen her long?

-Long, thousands of years.

-Are you immortal?

-Not quite.

-Does she love you?

-She is a spirit. As a spirit she will come.

-Does she know about me?

-I think, yes.

-Are you a spirit, too?

-Now not.

-A spirit and an ordinary woman, can they copulate?

-Perhaps not.

-But how was it that you have become an ordinary mortal?

-The spirit abandoned me.

-Father said he had met him in heaven.

-I don't know.

-He was in a hurry to some place. Said it was a big assembly of the devils.

-He is always in a hurry to some places.

-So, he was a devil?

-Do you know about the devil?

-Yes, the spirit between good and bad.

-It is interesting, - said Ben.

-Do you feel bad here?

-On the contrary, I have found a new love here. You are miraculous.

-I want to bear a little Ben.

-Do you know my name?

-A spirit said it to my father asking to preserve you for the tribe of the Oroks.

- Oh boy.

-The spirit of our child Omi, that sang in the smoke vent, I saw him on the fir tree branch. He will always come, alight upon the Shaman's tree branches, he will wait for our son to be born, so that he will get into him.

-But if he will migrate to warm countries, he will not endure.

- He will migrate, sure.

From the inside of the tabernacle there appeared Ogdo's sisters: Diente, Poodian, Yakoon, Temoon, in luxurious clothes, with decorations, that were suspended from hems, sleeves, forehead, ears, nose.

-But my child's Omi has already established on the morning star of Cholbo, it is waiting, it is calling, that we create our baby, - said Diente, pressing ever closer against Ben. She was the slimmest amidst the girls, and the tallest. Ben liked her smile, that reflected the insatiable passion for love.

-It is your turn, Diente, - said Ogdo, having found strength in her, but you will have to wait until our common host gathers strength, so that for you, too, this story turns out happily.

-I know, Ogdo, - answered Diente, - I know how kind you are. I love you very much.

- And the Omi of my child is on the moon, under the shelter of Omi-bear, - said Temoon, the youngest of the sisters.

-The Omi of my son is in a rain mushroom hidden under a layer of snow. He will get out and give life to my son, - said dreamily Yakoo, who was noted among the sisters by her strong built, large bones and strength.

-I have seen my baby Omi in a dream in the flow of the world river Engdekut, - said Poodian, - a green-eyed girl. -Our father Korsu Dzkan, he will get out of the Omoon Fish, to give life and breath to my baby.

-Girls, - said the elder sister Diente with authority, don't you see, how many branches have fallen from the Shaman's tree, go and clean it, since soon from the cities and villages of the world pilgrims will come to worship.

-And what will you do, - asked Temoo.



-I will take our common man, put him down, he will relax, will gather health and strength.

The girls, giggling, took their merry-making to the tree of the world.

The elder sister, who by the status and by qualitative indications was the second, embraced Ben tightly, and they walked towards the tent. Ben went to bed, while Dooente covered him with a mat, sat at his side and started to feed him.

-What is the meaning of your name, - asked Ben.

-Dooente is a man-bear, the spirit and the host of the Taiga. His paw is bigger than Kabarga. He joined with a woman and the whole tribe of bears was born.

-So, Dooente was a male?

-My father gave me this name before I was born, he thought it would be a boy. They say that on the last day the spirit made me a girl. It is just the Festival of Bears today. You will never see such a multitude of the Oroks together at once.

-But it seems to me that in a hundred years you will count thousands.

-Well, if you work well, my father will assign a spirit in your name.

- Yes, the spirit of fertilization, isn't it?

-There can be nothing without love, - said Dooente, took off her clothes, lied down beside Ben, pressed tightly against him, then kissed the man's breast, and...

-Where do you know it from?

-We know everything, - answered Dooente.

Dooente was awakened by loud noise from the outside and stirred up Ben, too. It was a realization of Dooente's dream – to go out of the tent with the public watching, to show that she has a man at her side. The mob got silent at once. Everybody turned up towards the couple. Dooente, in a fit of showing off, put her hand on her belly as if to say that she has already the signs of pregnancy.

It was for the first time that Ben felt sorry that it was not Benjamin who had appeared in the Northern country instead of him. In one year he would have written a smashing novel about

this place. "But what if he has the same experience through his perception and is now writing down everything, - thought Ben, and decided to inquire into everything in detail, to be sure to think about what he has seen and felt, feeling that Benjamin felt and recorded everything. However, a little later he decided to do the recording, too, so that, who knows, maybe his thoughts reached Benjamin.

In the morning there was a telephone call from the businessman Vasily, to invite Benjamin and Garnik to hash. The place of the assembly is a coffee house and a car wash Margushavan, nuclear physicists doctors Vladimir and Levon Beglarians, with sons. The coffeehouse owner who was a young man from the village of Maragha, handed Ben a cellular phone. It was a familiar voice.

-I am Yura Harutiunian, your classmate, - said the voice in the tube, the coffee boy is my son, he has grown, you will not recognize him. I have an unfortunate news for you. Your classmate Yura Khachikian died, you could not be located

Benjamin told Vladimir and Levon Beglarians that the study of the Bagratuni family resulted in finding one of their branches spread in Artsakh. One of the branches of Sahl Smbatian is the family of black priests (Karakeshishians), of which one part were the rulers of Nish, the other one adopted Islam and became the rulers of Shaki. Black Abov of the Nizh rulers with their clan move to Talish and are promoted to the Meliks, whose followers are noted for their gallantry and patriotism. They, the Beglarians of Margushevan, are the heirs of that branch, i.e. their roots are of Bagratuni. While the Muslim branch produced the notable Khans like Chelebin and Selim. Another branch of Sahl, whose main representatives are Sahak Sevada, Parisos Senekerim and Artsakhi Hamam, Filippe Kings of Derbent, the Big Prince Hasan-Jalalyan, in their turn produce ramifications, filling the Artsakh world with the Bagratunis.

Vasia, who was the initiator of the Khash, told an Artsakh joke:

-Once Arustam calls his neighbor Hakob, call and dump the crop from our hazelnut tree. Hacob climbs the tree and starts to

shake it, while Arustam with his wife are harvesting the crops. Hacob complains from up the tree: "what is it you are doing, I am toiling here shaking the tree, while you make love down below". Arustam says:, "No, Hacob, you are mistaken, no love, nothing of the kind". I don't know but what I see from here looks so. Hakob descended, Arustam climbed up the tree and reaching the top looked down and exclaimed: "Oh, yes, Hakob dear, it is surprising it looks here this way, as if you and my wife...".

The Karabakh bursts of laughter fill a Moscow cafe.

However, everybody's attention is centered on the leader of the Oroks and Chief Shaman Oigir and his female disciple Ogdo. They have been done in the first wooden sculpture, preparing for a special festive ritual. From different tents and villages the Oroks' families brought along gifts and food, each according to their own capacity.

The principal meaning of the Bear Festival was to kill the bear with a special weapon, to following procedure is the burial of the bear's soul, then the transfer of his soul to the host of the Taiga, the giant bear Duente, who will ensure the rebirth of the bear that has been killed.

Not far from the world tree they stacked firewood in a pyramid and started a fire. Everything was done using a special ritual. Temoo who was the youngest of the sisters, awarded a special status by reason of her name. Ben thought that the turn to be fertilized was Temoo's, she had more likeness to Ogdo, rather her fuller version. When she smiled, Ben thought it was Ogdo who was at his side.

-Tava Egeni is the chief sanctity of the house, - said Temoo, - he helps Father to hunt. Always goes in front, reaches the animal, from inside removes the soul, the hunter feels it, and strikes momentarily. Now let us go near the fire, I will tell you about the fire, since without being aware of all you will not understand what goes on. Tava Egen tells the Shaman about the previoius cases, about the events with the voice of cracking of the burning wood, with the flight of the sparks, with the words of hot flames.

Have you ever seen a speaking fire? Father knows the language of the flames. Fire is holy, it is not allowed to cast sharp things in the fire.

-The soul of Tava Egen can be injured. It is not allowed either to pour water or spit into the fire.

-But why do they throw pieces of food into the fire?

-In this way people feed Tava Egen.

Ben took out papers from his pocket and started to make notes.

-What are you writing? What are those letters?

-Armenian. What you have told, I am writing down, so that the world would know about the Oroks.

-So, the spirit that sent you here did not send you especially to fertilize us?

-Mainly not, rather for multiplying the tribe, of course, if I can manage to do that.

-You can. Ogdo has already told about the wonders you can do with regard to the problem of love

-But you forget about my age.

- What is it?

- Six hundred and sixty-six.

-Is it too much or too little? My father says, the older, the better.

- Love or age?

- Both.

- You don't say so!

Temoo and Ben entered the tent. Ben was tired and lay down on the floor, at the same moment he bounced up. He touched the floor and finding a needle, handed it to Temoo.

-We have been trying hard to find this needle, - said Temoo, - a needle is a holy object among the Tunguses.

-A needle also has a soul?

-No, it has no soul, but there is an old story about the needle. In the Taiga a nomad Evenkil roamed. He had a wife, a child and deer. They stopped on a river bank, breaking their

tent. Leaving his family and deer, Evenkil goes fishing. When after fishing he comes back home, his wife is crying. He asks:

-Why are you crying?

-Bandits attacked, drove away all deer, but I hid myself with the child and we stayed alive.

The husband says:

-Well, you scared me. I thought you lost your needle.

-In old times in a Tunguz household a woman had only one needle, said Temoo -When that one was lost, the clothes could not be sewn, the whole family being sent to hell. That's what the price of a needle was for us.

Ben got a piece of paper and a pen out of his pocket and started to write down this story by Temoo.

"It is strange, but sometimes the pen won't write, like an unbridled stubborn ass, that suddenly starts disobeying the master, having his own private opinion, - thought Benjamin. - Perhaps the pen, too, has its opinion about what I write. It seems there is a lot that it dislikes. Well, I don't give a damn about it, what I invent and make it write, of which only I understand something, and that, too, with difficulty, since whoever will see it, will say that a bird with ink-stained flies has flown through the pages of the notebook. When there is no flow of thought, the pen sort of dries up, I crumple the papers, however, it does obstinacy, the same as in the mentioned ass, for it wants to go in another direction, While the pen is in fact waiting for another word, that will clutch in with the subconscious with no intermediaries, the thoughts will get mixed with the ink and, like clear brooks, spill on the surface of the paper. It was so when I saw a girl in a subway car, that looked like the blessed Evelina. Through an opening in the leaves remaining on the branch of a giant mulberry tree, we peeped out, I was eating her naked thighs with my eyes, while she was endlessly laughing, filling the mountain valley with the feeling of happiness".

Then through some miracle the pen became associated with the Celestial Nut and Alex who appeared in the microworld.

-Have you got the model of this world at your surface, or there is a microscopic Nut here?

-Everything here is like it is in your world, that is the desktop global variety of your world. Had there been no microworld, the human world wouldn't have been possible.

If not for the molecular and atomic world, wouldn't there have been the Universe?

-There wouldn't.

-What about the world of the microbes? Do you also keep it under control?

-Everything there is clear and distinct. You will see it for yourself.

-What if we are not able to exit that world, are we then going to become microbes?

-No, the program will secure our automatic release.

-What if the time is insufficient...what if there is a malfunction in the computer?

-There is no computer at all here, everything is within the process of the world.

-Do the microbes also have banks, states, races, civilizations, development?

-Development is also preplanned.

-So, provisions have been made for the birth of people on the earth?

There may be some corrections in the process. But it is not our business, we only observe...

-And pass on information.

-That is in-built.

-If they made a desert out of Mars, then they had to move to Earth as rapidly as possible.

-One could suspend it.

-And to move the embryos only. Otherwise the Earth would be left to the Neanderthals only.

-The Neanderthals were grown by them, so that the higher sort would be injected.

-The Hominid ancestors were not convenient? Oh, what do you say, - I am thirsty, - said Alex.

-Do you know the story of the water? - asked the Celestial Nut.

-I need fresh water, - insisted Alex.

-Water is as old as the world, - said the Nut, - these drops were absorbed in the mountains, to find their way in the strata of the earth, to flow off, and to evaporate again.

-I will sore from world to world in the form of clouds, I will pour down into the ocean... but I am thirsty and I want water from a spring.

Soon there was an announcement that they reached the University station. Following the Bishop's directions, he headed towards Kashira Street, with the "Prince" restaurant flooded with light. The Armenian guys were carried away by a card game. Benjamin said he wanted to see Ashot Khachatryan, the owner. A young man, who was a vocalist in the band, said:

-The restaurant manager is coming now, he will help you get in touch with Ashot.

A plump-cheeked stout young man came in completely ignoring Benjamin. One of the guys explained who the visitor was and what he wanted. The man passed by silently. Having waited for an hour, he went up to his office. The manager was unoccupied. Benjamin introduced himself, saying that he had come by the request of the late Shahen, to see Ashot and Genia.

-I was a young boy, when we moved out of the Karachinar village, said the restaurant manager, - I have nothing to do with the people from Shahumian.

-My request is to pass my phone numbers to Ashot, -said Benjamin, - and since I have no other means to hook him, if he respects the memory of Shahen, let him get in touch with me. If he does not call, I will understand that he does not want to meet, that he doesn't care about Shahumian or Karachinar, or Karabakh, Armenia, or Shahen's memory.

Benjamin remembered an encounter with the leader of Novosibirsk community at the Writers' House of Armenia. He insisted that he was a patriot. Benjamin suggested that he cite an example of him being a patriot.

-Nineteen drafted boys escaped from Armenia, reaching Novosibirsk by plane, he said, - the Russian authorities decided

to send them back to Yerevan. I interfered, and awarded them the Russian citizenship.

-That maybe nation-loving but it certainly is betrayal of national interest with regard to the Home Country,- said Benjamin,- you have deprived the Armenian Army of 19 soldiers, having settled down in Novosibirsk, they will invite at least a dozen conscripts each. Those in their turn... As a result of your actions, the army of Armenia will lose a whole division of military personnel. That is what may happen through your love of nation...

Ogir came up to Ben. They greeted each other like close kin. Temoo stepped aside meekly.

-I want to tell you some truths, lest there be a misunderstanding. The Oroks are simple people, so they like simplicity.

-Quite clear, - said Ben.

-I am a Shaman, so my spirit often goes out of my body to roam the earth and the seas. With the help of the Endekit flow connecting the Upper and Lower Worlds I rose to the Upper world, trailing the children's and deer's spirits, since it is there that the spirit of non-comers to the world, Ngaktar, is located, then climbed the steps of trees to the Top Spirit of the World, then on the same steps I descended to the Lower World Buni, to get the spirit of the sick Shamans, then, with a tribal tributary of Endekit I went down, but below the forth level he usually sends his subordinate Shamans, Semenish. It was then that I examined you, there was no spirit in you. Then, on my way home I met the spirit of Sinken, who lives under the stem of my tree, he said a new spirit had entered you, and I had to go and save you from the jaws of a wolf.

-Yes, I was already in a big tunnel sliding towards the light. I was already nearing them. Here was my thirty-two-year-old father, the great builder Avanes, who was killed in WWII, my sixty-year-old mother, my hunter uncle Aramais, grandfather Chukkas, killed by the childhood friend Firdausi. There were other people, However, I did not have time enough to see, for from the other side of the tunnel there were calls, too. I doubted,



when some mighty force suddenly cast me back, then someone came inside me.

-You have appeared at our borders, - said the Great Shaman, - this is the realm of our spirits, they saved you so that you become an Orok and fulfill your mission with regard to our people. The human world feels guilty on our issue, therefore it is trying to redeem their sins by sending a male like you.

-In the neighboring villages, in the tents scattered in the Taiga, are there no men?

-Our tabernacles are very distant from one another. In a neighboring village which is three tabernacles, there is one young orochun, but the girls don't want him.

-He prefers deer to women.

-The girls did not go to school.

-A girl learns only reading and writing, then goes to the city to never return to the tent again. Civilization, that is what is killing our nation. The Orok families can be counted on your fingers.

-The civilization wants to redeem its sins through me. Except perhaps the big affairs that require sacrifices.

-Is it bad for you here? Five beauties serve you, do concubine service to you. I can make it tenfold. Now, see, what beauties revolve around the Holy Tree. See the longing they show when looking at you? They have already heard about your insatiable passion. They tell legends about you in the whole upward flow of Edekit.

-You have yet to mention the wolves.

-No, the spirit of the wolves is my servant. Can you see the humility of their formation?

-But one of them was looking at you with hate, - said Ben, - and there was an evil spirit inside.

-I know. If I kill her, the evil spirit will enter another one. This problem should be solved through spirits.

-But they don't come your way at the place where you live, do they ever trouble the girls?

-Not a single one of them can cross the border of my area.

-Yes, but how do they determine the borders of your realm?

-Well, I don't conceal it from you. I do it the way they do.

O, how very interesting, exclaimed Ben laughing, - for the first time ever I learn that men can tag the borders of their territory like wolves. Perhaps you gather urine in a pot and mark special places.

-No, why a pot, we have our places to urinate. Once a wolf violated the border, the wolves themselves resolved his question.

-Did they tear him into pieces?

-No, not so strict. They banished him from the pack.

-Now if I water those places, they will not pass there?

-That will be a sign that the Shaman is not there, they will attack at once and kill all.

-You have no deputy?

-Expecting...

Ben and Oiogir looked at each other with a smile.

-But you look concerned, - sorry, I thought that without a wife an Orok's life must be difficult.

-An Oroks' proverb says: "Kengermi sanmimi gogos sivdia", i.e. losing the wife will put out the fire. "Akhia achin bae angajiakan", i.e., a man with no wife is an orphan. "Beeke akhi irgivki", i.e., a woman makes a man grow. It is an anniversary of my wife Inelche's death. I must call her soul in Booni. But for a Booni escort one must have a special ritual. A few souls must be sent to the other world to Booni at once. In Booni the dead live the same life as on Earth, they hunt, they cry. I have been there. It is a country where the sunlight is weak, the sky is cloudy and the soil is like vapor. What is good on earth, there is bad, and vice versa. A rifle, an arrow, weapons there break down. As to a living man, in Booni he is invisible. Their words are like rustling of fire. You understand nothing. A man is as dangerous for those who live there, as spirits are for men. To discover families there and to send them to earth, this can be done only by the Shaman of the World of the Dead. Hedaun was the first who opened the way to Booni, the World of the Dead, since his son was the first dead. He opened a passage in the heaven, which is also a passage for the dead, lest the Earth should be filled with

old people.

-That is all very interesting, said Ben, trying to write it all down.

-However, my concern is elsewhere, -said the Great Shaman, - yes, a worry is not easy to hide. From remote places came Chapagir, the Patriarch of the Oroks. He brought bad news from far away. Our tribesmen destroy their tabernacles and villages, sell the herds of deer and leave for the cities. We, evenks, are being Russified. For a bottle of laughing water they sell leather hats, coats, wives, tabernacles... Now they commonly go to Ukraine, merge with the indigenous population. What can you do against a civilization, against large states?

-Can't you retain the men by whatever means?

-Chapogir tells that from the neighboring tents there is an ongoing stealing. Every day a few animals are kidnapped.

Who are they, not the Tungus, are they?

-No, they are from the Turkic tribes, that migrated from the Altai.

-But they are sheep-breeders.

-Now they also breed deer.

Central Asia, The Iranian Atrpatakan, Artsakh of the Armenians... Oigir, I am myself interested in the issues of national minorities, and I've been dispatched here to study the problem and to find a solution for you.

-So, you must see everything and evaluate it. It would be right if you took part in the ritual of feeding the spirit of Temoo.

-What is that?

-It is now fall. soon the rivers and lakes will become frozen. But Temoo is the spirit of fishing. If you have been rehabilitated and have enough strength, go with Temoo.

-Is Temoo a woman?

-Do you mean our Temoo?

-No, the spirit.

-In a spirit, gender is unimportant. As far as I know, my younger daughter Temoo will escort you. If you do not feel well enough, you can go back to the tent, Temoo will nurse you.

-No, I will go, it is interesting.

-Tamnaha oogirivden nengdeleden, tkigni tkdelen, - spoke the Shaman in Orok.

-What? - asked Ben.

-Ah, I have forgotten for a moment that you ignore Orok, but it is high time you learn. I said, the mist is lifting, good weather is coming. -Addressed Temoo, - my beautiful Temoo, teach our language to our brother. An Orok ignoring Orok cannot be a full-fledged Orok, his progeny all the more so.

-Your word is the law, father, -said Temoo.

-Orok Ben, - said the Shaman, - first of all I will say, do not be surprised, we are gathering sterile women here. We declare that you will cure them.

-I don't have the slightest idea how it is done.

-The important thing is that they know that they are being treated, and cured, so that they will conceive.

-No, I cannot do that, - said Ben.

-If you don't, you will commit a great sin.

According to the preliminary agreement, Benjamin must have met representatives of the papers "Литературная Газета" and "Россия". It was six o'clock. It was already dark. asking questions, he found a dark street and was walking towards the editor's office, when suddenly a tall young man appeared, bent down, picked up something from the ground, then showed a roll of dollar bills.

-Let us step aside and share it, - he suggested.

That was a common script for rascals everywhere. He knew that someone might bite.

-I want nothing, take it all...

-Are you looking for the editor, a journalist, aren't you?

-Yes, I am a journalist, answered Benjamin.

At that moment another stranger appeared addressing the tall one.

-I have lost a large amount of money, haven't you found it?

-No, what money, - said the tall one. In his speech there was a Georgian trace.

-Wait, I saw one of you bend down.

He started shoving his hands in his pockets. I knew that it was a show, played well by the street rascals.

-I will check you, too, the rascal said to me, open your bag to see what is in.

-A journalist, - said the tall one, - there is no money on him.

-You cannot say it, - said his comrade, let's see.

Benjamin opened the bag just to show some books.

-I can give a book to each of you, - he said, thinking of them as of new readers.

-No, keep the books to yourself, let me see your pockets...

-I am going to call the police, - threatened Benjamin.

The street was empty. It would be useless to shout for help.

He shoved his hand in the breast pocket, taking off a passport and a membership card of the Armenian Writers' Union, with a few Russian rubles.

-No, these are not of my money, put them in place, the man faced the tall one: you grabbed my money.

He removed a wad from his trousers pocket.

-I will call up the boys, you will see what they do to you, - he said and walked away rapidly.

-Ah, what a story I got in, - said the tall one and escaped aside.

Thousands of people get into the traps of this kind of rascals. They are very smart.

I came up to the editorial office, then got out after having done my business, again in a dark street I put my hand into my breast pocket. My passport and Party Membership were there, but nine thousand rubles were gone. It was then that I understood how I was cheated. When returning the documents, his palm covered the thousand-ruble bills, the hand rapidly sticking in the trousers pocket of the tall man, leaving there Benjamin's money and taking out "the lost pack".

At last, perhaps with a delay, he felt injured and robbed.

Fortunately, the Metro card remained. He had also a hundred-ruble bill, whereby he could reach Dolgoprudni.

It was late evening, when I came out into the Chistie Proodi Street. A boy and a girl were embracing. The girl had a somewhat strange voice.

-But I have worked in a whorehouse, - said the girl with pride.

-It could be seen at once, - answered the boy.

-From what?

The boy felt his mistake.

-Well, it is unimportant...

Work at a whorehouse is prestigious for the girl, she is not a simple girl, not everyone can be admitted there. You must be not only attractive and seductive, have smooth body, but also you must be firm in the issues of love, ready to fulfill any wishes of your customer. She also danced at the pole, to delight the house customers. But for the boy it is important that the girl should be with him that evening. Both of them know what they want. And that is what has cemented them. They were gone, and it was as if it was a stage of the theater, in their place now there was another couple. A Russian woman stopped a Caucasus man, demanding something of him stubbornly. The man was trying to make excuses, release himself from the woman's hands, but the woman was sort of chained to him. From the highly tensioned argument and the unsuccessful attempts of the man to justify himself he understood that at some time in the past they had loved each other, the woman had a child, however it became clear later that he had a wife and a child in the Caucasus, who recently came to Moscow, so he had to leave the Russian woman.

He used to examine people's faces at the Metro station. A Georgian can be confused with no one. The other one's face was also quite peculiar. A narrow face drawn towards the nose. They were evidently stationed close to the bank, to see who would go out with a bag full of money. In that case they would use the operation "Adamand". That is to show that they who will appraise the glass as a precious stone, they will sell the stone to him at a very handy price, he will happily come home, show it to

his wife, then it will perchance fall on the floor and be broken into small pieces...

From his sitting place he looked around the car and his gaze was suddenly stopped by eyes of a beauty. She faintly smiled. Next moment she was sitting at his side, half-turned towards Benjamin, removed a note-book from her handbag, so that the man could see. She was proposing services and for each action there was a price. The start was a dancing presentation. The second one was called "Minet". Then there were sexual relations in different positions. The girl posed a moment, then wrote that she had shown low prices that cannot compare with those on the market. Next moment she wiped out the figures and proposed new prices. Benjamin understood that the girl had probably come from Volgograd or Saratov, or Ukraine, Siberia, Moldova, she was hungry and needed money at any price.

But how could she know that rather than addressing the plundered, it may be better to address the plunderers.

He remembered a girl that he met eight years before in a Moscow trolley couch, who opened her coat a bit to offer her nakedness...

In the morning Ben woke up and came out of the tabernacle. The Shaman's tabernacle was surrounded by other tents, with deer and dogs here and there. In fact, a whole village appeared. When the Shaman moved off to a group gathered around a fire, Temoo said:

-Father said we have to go to the lake shore.

-Of course, we must feed the spirit called in your name.

-It is me who is in his name, rather than he. I will take the needed feed and we go.

-Is it far from here?

-We shall drive in a sledge.

-Are they all coming?

-Whoever wishes, that is who wants to fish, make a net, prepare a fishing rod, or simply like to eat fish.

Soon the sledges pulled by dogs and deer filled with lively Oroks, set out towards the Mokjokit Lake.

Coming to celebrate the Bear Festival were not only the

Oroks, but also the Evens, the Nanais, the Oreches, the Ultsins and the negidals and representatives of their families, people who were held in respect in the areas populated by the Tungus and the Manjurs. Ben counted up to twenty-five sledges. They held Oiogir as the greatest and the most gifted Shaman. Oiogir used to tell that the Shamans are not produced by graduating educational courses, as is the rule for the Christians or the Muslims, but rather, experienced senior shamans select the most gifted and talented children, who are capable to feel the nature, have outstanding memory, can read people's thoughts, guess the future, acquire the secrets of traditional medicine, adopt them as disciples and start transferring their knowledge and their secret to them. They have to be very patient, love and preserve their inherited Northern lands. A Shaman must also be an excellent hunter. As to Oiogir, he is Number One in all those skills among the Shamans. He was also known for an outstanding capacity to bring people to unity. He had managed to reconcile the hostile tribes, to bring them to a common goal, making them understand that the contemporary civilization and globalization is a great hazard to the minor nations and their languages, habits, and to the factors stipulating their sufficient reproduction.

Ben felt every moment, in what respect he was held by the guests of the Festival. At the time of the ritual around the Shaman tree, Oiogir told the story about the man-spirit sent by the spirits from heaven, praised his capacities and knowledge, informed that he had come to save their tribe from disappearing.

Ben counted up to twenty-five sledges. The lake was not far away, in a few minutes they were at the lake shore. Temoo holding high the fruit, cereals, in large wooden tray filled with tobacco, approached an unfrozen yet part of the lake, to address the Spirit of Water.

-Temoo Edeni, Lord-Spirit of the Water World and fishes, you who with your old wife live on an island in the middle of the lake, you oversee the abundance of fishes in the rivers, lakes and the seas, there should be more feed in the waters for the fishes to grow, and, to please you, we have brought fruits, meals



that you love. Accept our offer, help the hunters, so that fishing be abundant, and we, from all the Tungus tribes, who have gathered here today, to worship you and to ask for your help, give us the fish that is due to us, according to our need, and here you are, we send you your share. -Temoo put the tray on the water of the lake, pushed it and it slid off. Then everyone cast a piece of food in the water. Soon a school of fish appeared in the water, and started to quickly pick up the fragments of food. There was no end to the joy of the Tunguses. Temo again appealed to those present, - you have seen that Temoo Edeni heard my Shamanian word, taught to the Great Shaman Oigir by my Father who is the Leader of the Oroks, and who sent many fishes to us. Let us love and respect our Great Shaman Oigir, who is loved and respected by the spirits of the sky, the earth and the waters, through him the connection to us is maintained. And now everyone is welcome to fish by fishing rods in parties of two. The fish will be donated to the bear since it is his day.

The boys and girls took no time to throw the pre-assembled fishing rods into the water. The fish was so abundant in this ice-free part of the lake that not a single rod was withdrawn from the water without fish. Terminating the event of the feeding and worshipping the Temoo Spirit of the Waters, The Tunguses boarded the sledges and hurried back to the Shaman seat of Oigir.

Temoo who was the main character of the event, snuggled up to Ben, then whispered in his ear:

-Temoo Edem told me that today you belong to me.

-I am not sure that a spirit could say such a thing, answered Ben.

-Why?

-Because I am not a fish, but that spirit can give commands to fishes only.

-You are knowledgeable and artful, - concluded Temoo, - but it will not stand in the way of our love.

Oigir, without waiting for the return of the lakers, had already started the ritual. Sitting cross-legged on ornamented

floor mats spread on the snow were guests that came from a very long distance exclaiming unanimously:

-He'hei, he'hei, he'hei...

The Shaman sitting cross-legged was rocking in his place and sang in-between the strokes of the drum.

*O, my relatives.*

*Let our deer be healthy and multiply,*

*Let our fire always smoke,*

*Let the tents be numerous,*

*He'hei, he'hei, he'hei...*

*He'hei, he'hei, he'hei...*

Those present sang backup to the Shaman.

There was a moment's silence. The rhythm of the tambourine was sharply changed. The Shaman called the servant spirits.

-Kargingilvi-delingilvi-sekakoorvi-gootkekoorvi, bira mooven, lama mooven, amoot mooven kotoldi Misindelnel, Himat, Mindoolo~...

The cross-legged people sang backup.

-Arakooman, aiat,arakooman, aiat...

(Hangi-um, anshtap, hangi-um, anitap...)

The Shaman went on:

-Spirits of bears, spirits of deer, spirits of wild deer, spirits of wolves, spirits of beavers,

Going all around the Earth,

to me, rapidly to me,

like winds, like storms,

Rapidly to me...

The Shaman beats the tambourine wildly, rotates, leaps into the air, waving long sleeves, makes motions as if he catches spirits with his mouth, then throws the tambourine and the clapper to his aids, continues dancing, while Ogden goes on clapping the drum. The audience sit in their places and repeat the movements of the Shaman, they do what he does, repeating in one voice the howling of animals, the twittering of birds, the whistling of spear, attacking here and there, then he takes a palm branch, playing a scene of hunting, gives the names of the

hunted animals. The Shaman again leaps up, swallowing the spirits, then is appeased and says: "Oopkatva bakan" (I have found all).

It remained to hunt for the spirit of Shingeken (the Spirit of Success), who would help the animals gain their land. Ogden again supplies father with the drum and clapper. The Shaman sings under easy strokes:

*my spirits, aids,  
the whole world is transient,  
come running and flying,  
come swimming and crawling,  
come do magic, smell,  
look for Shingeken,  
find Shingeken,  
persuade him  
to give us food,  
to give us warm water,  
that we live healthy,  
that we live happy.*

The Shaman again becomes agitated, throws the tambourine up, catches it again, dancing. The audience is living through his movements and gestures, since every movement is an advise, a sign of an important phenomenon. He not only leaps up, but travels through in unknown worlds. Here, he opens his wings, like an eagle, and all of them know that the Shaman has entered the Upper World. Sometimes the Shaman gives interpretations of his movements.

-Here I approach the Sun, - he shows the heat of the Sun, - khekooko (oh, so hot), - wiping off the sweat, everybody can see how difficult it is for the Shaman, suddenly he cries out: here is Shingeken, he is plunging to the bottom of the sea, - he, too, goes down chilled, too, at the same moment he exclaims: I got him, - with a swift motion, as if catching a bird, seizing the spirit from his beak with his mouth, he says: Shingeken gives us only two wild deer.

The audience singing backup demands:

-Ask him, ask hard.

The Shaman says:

-The spirit says if on an old woman's head one can find a flea or a louse, then the hunt will be bigger.

The Shaman lies down on hairy mat, mumbling something under his nose, a little later rises, takes up the drum, clapping and rotating, under the people's exclamations of approval, he sends the animals back to the Taiga, comes back and declares solemnly:

-Well, tomorrow you can hunt a wild deer.

He takes up the clapper, comes up to the animals, blows smoke in their faces, comes up to the trees, caresses the stumps and the faces of the deer with the clapper. Then the last to pass three times is the Shaman. He is taking along the statue of Magdgre. When making the final passage, the Shaman spits in the mouth of the statue, then ties it to Khichipkan's legs, and strikes him with the idol of Mental, saying:

-Im erupcha, manavkal, in eroopcha, achin okal... (bad life, get lost, bad life, stay in the

Khichupkani and Maggre are thrown in the fire and burnt.

-Listen, the fire whispers gently, it talks, it is telling a story, - explained Temoo. -If you can hear, understand its tongue, you will know what is awaiting you.

Fire knows everything.

-Of course. The Shaman knows how to talk to fire and to make predictions.

The Shaman enters the tent, lies on a mat and asks the spirits to leave him. He opens his mouth and then spits out. Ogdo gives him water. The Shaman wets his finger in the water, touching it on his eyes. The eyes open, the spirits flee.

Outside men are slaughtering a bear brought as an offering, divide it into pieces and distribute it among the guests. This meat is to be roasted and eaten, the preparations are in full swing.

The fire is extinguished, and several shamans lined up the glowing charcoals in a circle, and started dancing a shamanian dance under the tambourine and a drum trampling the smoking charcoals with bare feet. Having finished the Shamans' ritual,

there came a general singing and dancing. The Tunguses clasped their hands in a round dance around the Shaman's tree. Ben jotted down one of their songs:

*It Snows*

*In the high mountains*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda,*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda*

*The swans*

*Fly to the South,*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda*

*Tell about us*

*To people who are there,*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda*

*But we remain*

*In the snows,*

*And when it becomes cold,*

*We shall put on fur coats*

*And we shall walk on sledges.*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda*

*Bolda, bolda, bolda*

Before dawn Ben woke up and came out of the tent. It was a moonlit night. He was surprised at the changes. It was as if new tents have grown around their tabernacle, coming from their insides were vivid and sonorous voices with laughter. All chimneys were smoking. There were deer and draught dogs all around.

## CHAPTER 14

### GOD

Late at night, when Benjamin was going to bed, he could hear a distinct metallic voice in his brain: "Mother is not with you"... Where was it from, that voice? Having been carried away by daily cares or by writing, nothing reminded him of mother those days. There was a feeling of guilt. He had lost his mother

twenty-five years before, but spoke to her every day, felt her presence all the time. Only there was a difficulty of often attending the graveyard of Tonashen – a remote place. He was trying every year on December the 4<sup>th</sup>... “My God, it is December 4 today, but I have not remembered the day my Mother died... So, she is there, she is watching me from some world there, - thought Benjamin. In the years of the Artsakh Movement hundreds of hazardous affairs took place, and each time he felt he was safe, hoping he will do as the fates decree. As a result, he subconsciously felt that wherever he happened to go, he will safely return. It was this way in Sumgait, Gandzak, Shooshee... The day of return would come.

He took along a few bundles of books, and Garnik saw him off to the airport. The next day was his son's birthday; he had to be in time. His heart withered. Where is his son? Will he forgive abandoning him at an uncertain moment?

He thought he had already had enough trouble, perhaps travelling home might be cloudless. Here he was at the Moscow beltway. The electronic signboards showed no delays. However, very soon the vehicle was stuck in a tight traffic jam. A two hours of slow motion knocked his guts out.

-I understand now, why the inhabitants of Moscow have heart attacks, - said Benjamin, - while everyone is trying to go and live in Moscow. Already from nervous stress fingers are aching.

-Don't worry, if it goes on like this to the end, we shall get there all the same, - said Garnik, -we shall arrive ahead of time.

At last, it was all clear, and they went on. Garnik informed that the flight was delayed to 02 hours. He urged him not to wait but go home. The next chair in the waiting room was occupied by a man from Central Asia.

- I am Tajik, - he said, - going home for vacation.

-What do you do?

-What will a Tajik do in Moscow? A worker at a construction site... We have also Armenians there. Good working people.

-Is it tough in Tajikistan now?

-Is it possible to keep a family at ten dollars a month? We are compelled to leave home and family and come to Russia, to do black jobs... Only the drug lords can enjoy life there. Keeping ten wives, ten vehicles, raping girls right and left and kicking them out so they become prostitutes.. One can say nothing to them. In the past I used to be a policeman, senior lieutenant. Here I get 18 thousand rubles salary. That is a lump sum for a Tajik. About 720 dollars.

-Many of you are in the drug traffic, aren't you?

-Yes, but I had been battling against it since I had been in the police. With little success.

-Yes, when the Russians were in charge of the border, the penetration of drugs was impeded, but then the Russians withdrew, all hurdles were removed.

-Why?

-You know, when an officer receives ten dollars a month, and they come and offer ten thousand dollars for turning a blind eye to a passing caravan, what will you do?

-And in Russia, millions of young men doing junk, pushing the country to hell, they don't let this huge country get on equal terms with the civilized Europe, - that's what I said.

-That' what it is, - said Arif Rahmanov, - but if not for the enormous Russian market, there would hardly be any sense in drug trafficking. In your country, as far as I understand, traffic is almost zero.

-Quite so. Doesn't the Militia give you trouble here?

-No, my papers are in order.

Through the fog in Yerevan the flight was delayed to ten in the morning, then to twelve.

On the other end of the giant airport hall Benjamin noticed a strange man contrasting with the buoyant environment. He was peculiar both in his dress and behavior: in his hand he held a tambourine, hitting it with a clapper, was rotating within a passage, leaping up, as if wanting to fly, but each time spreading himself on the floor. The passersby paid no attention to him at all. Benjamin had read about the shamans of the

Northern peoples, approaching that huge-bodied man he recognized as the Shaman at once.

-Come, - suggested the Tajik, -perhaps the man needs help.

-We shall help, - agreed Benjamin.

The man had protruding cheekbones, almond-shaped narrow eyes, was oval-faced. He was distinguished from the environment also by his dress: Hanging from his hems and sleeves were different charms and spiritual signs. He struck his tambourine which he held overhead, rotating about the passage, then he jerked up, as if wanting to overcome the Earth's gravity and to soar in the air. But he helplessly collapsed and plopped down on the floor.

-Shall we help you, - asked Benjamin. The Northern man looked at Benjamin with surprise.

-Ben-Orok, are you here in Moscow? Have you come to help me? I thought that only you could help me to exit the crater of the evil spirit Khargi belonging to the elder brother of Seveki. However, we have agreed to visit our spirits together, haven't we?

Benjamin was confused, he did not know what to answer, perhaps even started to guess, that the Shaman had taken him for a spirit of his double. Ben even remembered that he started to feel cold lately with his body.

-You must be acquainted, Benjamin, you have been in the Northern country, haven't you?

I don't quite remember, answered Benjamin.

-Well, my Armenian brother, I have to go, since they are already calling to the flight.

-Go, Tajik brother, remember that our forefathers were akin.

-How was that?

-You have been part of Persian nation and their culture, while the Persian people are adjacent and related to the Armenians. -He turned up to the Shaman, - I am Benjamin.

-So, you are not Ben? - pronounced the Shaman, confused and frustrated.

Benjamin shook his head. Well, as I explained to the man of the frozen country, that he is confused with the spirit of his



double, who had abandoned him admitting inside himself another semi-soul.

-Forgive me, you are very much alike, like the two halves of an apple. Maybe you are his brother.

Benjamin shook his head.

-A compatriot, relative, neighbor... it can just happen that in a few bouts among the neighbors one man is more active than others.

-Ben and me, we are one soul.

-Yes, Ben has spoken to me about it, said the Shaman with inspiration, - you are his double.

Benjamin nodded his head.

-See, our Lord Booga made it so that in this mixing place I meet you and take you away, join your soul.

-Where is that?

-Well, there, in the Tundra. Taiga is good, It gives you food. You love hunting, don't you? Ben has told stories about the old Tomashen, Mrav, Aramais. Ben was not too smart at hunting. He was only a good sower, the only thing that he could do. Our girls were crazy about him.

-But the children of your tribe will be hairy, - said Benjamin anxiously.

-It is good, will keep them warm in winter. What about you, are you a good fertilizer?

-I don't do the things that is not relevant to me.

-It is not good at all. Women will not shelter you in their tents. Maybe Ben will help, will share his zeal with you, and you act together, for he alone will not cope.

-I am a married man, never betray.

-You will approach your soul, will regain your own self, will become the old-time Benjamin. Ben, too, is tired of isolated life. I am a shaman, I feel the bifurcation.

-But how shall I come? I have bought a ticket for Yerevan. They are calling for the flight.

-I have a lot of money. I have sold a whole herd of deer. Right now I will buy two tickets.

-And do you know our destination?

-No, but we must go in the North-Eastwardly direction. I will look out of the aircraft window and will recognize the Orok country.

-But I have no fur coat, even here I am cold.

-I will give you my coat. Here, wear it. I am never cold. I wear the fur for a visual effect, lest they mix me up with the crowd.

-What did you do in Moscow?

-In Moscow? Is this Moscow? I have heard it. I came after my soul. It flew off during a ritual, first as a crow, then as an eagle, I understood that I shouldn't have let it go. Followed it everywhere.

-And where did it go?

-It went to Ngakzar in the world of unborn grandchildren, to send the grandchildren to my tribe. Then I will go to the world of the unborn deer – Kuturak. First I descended to Endekit with the flow, then, seeing an aircraft on a flat land, examined the interior, but at that moment it went up, bringing me to this crater.

-Well, I am coming, Oiogir.

-You know my name, asked the Shaman with surprise

-Is it your name? Strange...

-Ben can see us, he is prompting you. You must obey him.

-I will try, - said Benjamin, took out a notebook from his pocket and started writing.

-Ben used to write, too, - said Oiogir.

It is good that he writes, we must write an interesting story together.

-What for is that, - asked the Shaman.

-Every present becomes past. But the past must be a lesson. If you remember your past with letters, you will live longer.

-But we have the word of mouth, that is remembered and retained by the shamans, and transferred to the new shamans.

-Wonderful, but I want you to be known to the civilization.

-Your civilization is killing the world of the Tunguz.

And, parallel to that, with no qualms of conscience, they obliterate the small nations, their millennia-old cultures and habits. If they read a book about you, they may think about you.

- Are there many small nations in the world?

-Yes, there have been, they did not want to be swallowed by the big, or rather, numerous, nations, they want to get free, to remain, but the big nations don't let them go.

-But I thought that only we were unlucky.

Ogdo, who had learned a lot from her father about her nation's past culture, always retold the traditions and conversations, striving to inspire love in her lover towards the Oroks and generally towards the Evenks, towards the nature of Siberia and the Taiga.

Once, when the Shaman sent his daughter some place, Ben decided to take a trip to the Taiga by himself, rejecting the suggestion by Temoo to go together. He had already started to rock and to crackle, as if someone invisible pulled the branches, to shake the tree, as if it were a pear tree, so as to pour the crop to the ground. At that moment Ashkhen appeared in the snow, dressed in bright red.

-Ben, I was not sure that you would be here, - said Ashkhen, - my inner voice said and I came.

-Ashkhen, I have missed you so much...

-Yes, you will, after your multiple plump-cheeked mistresses, of course, if they afford you time and breathing space.

-I was simply thrown into this ice-coated world regardless of my will.

-I know.

-And I have been deprived of all my advantages that I had previously possessed.

- I know.

-You know and haven't saved me. Why have you thrown me into this cold world?

-As if you feel so bad here.

-No, Ashkhen, everything is interesting, another mentality, that has stayed clean and immaculate for thousands of years. What I am concerned with now is how to save it.

-I came to take you back, said Ashkhen, - in a week's time a Universal Assembly is going to be convened. You will have to report.

-Where? Will you at least tell me the subject?

Yes, the discussion will be centered on the minorities and the problem of rescuing the cultures of minor nations, using the Oroks as an example. Armenia's President Elect has spoken about it at the UN.

-Yes, this is a serious progress.

-The problem has ripened, especially following your report. Do you want to go now?

-Ashkhen, I cannot do it without saying good-bye. These are pure people.

-Yes, "Ogdo, my beautiful Ogdo".

-I have been talking to you every hour.

-I know Ben. I was not allowed to visit you. I know that you have created a huge establishment. I am even ready to come and help in educating this new generation.

-Perhaps a close reservation may be created, isolated from the civilization, all with their deer.

-You will decide, - said Ashkhen. Ben found an indifferent subject.

-You don't love me anymore

-I don't know, Ben. Your absence has changed a lot of things. I have met Benjamin. He is more in agreement with my mother's story, more real.

-And you, Ashkhen, the two of us are in the same status, half-man, half-spirit, aren't we?

-I don't know, Ben, I understand nothing. You will come back and we shall see. You have another problem: you must go again to the time of King Vachakan and write an historical novel.

-What about the Oroks?

-Benjamin will replace you here.

-Why did you implicate him into this business? He must see about the situation with our son.

-The investigators are suggesting an interim solution.

-I see. But our establishment doesn't have this money.

-I know, Ben. They want to sell the house.

-Oh, are we going to send the family to Siberia? Can our people keep the deer, clean after them, find fodder, milk them and look after the newborn?

-Hardly. Ben, come to the same place tomorrow.

On the next day, Ben, going around the Taiga, saw a bunch of yellow leaves hanging from a branch. He had an overwhelming desire to jump up and touch the leaves with his palm. It was one of the habits remaining in him that was a link to his younger years.

-Let go, Ogdo, my hand wants to reach that leaf, - said Ben, he extended his hand and bounced.

However, he unexpectedly slid up and missed the leaf.

-Ben, Ben, what happened to you, - called Ogdo, - come back, don't leave me, Ben...

For Ben that flight was so unexpected that he could not even have time to say any words of consolation to Ogdo. All who were in any way concerned with Ben, because Ogdo says that he went after the Omis of their unborn children. Those omis would have come themselves, there was no need for the Shaman to run through river valleys, to go from one world to another to look for spirits.

-Ogdo, Ogdo, Ogdo...

He did not know whether Ogdo heard him. As to when Satan had jammed into him again, he never knew. Maybe, Ashkhen, either. He only knew that he was light as a feather and pushed in a predetermined direction. In a short time in the depth of the snow-covered Taiga he saw a gigantic tabernacle in the midst of smaller tents in a smoke-cloud. That had also many chimneys, smoking profusely.

He landed at the tent entrance. At the same moment some fur-clad men with flat faces approached and invited him in. In the tabernacle there were scores of fires burning, with shamans bustling around, beating the tambourines and speaking the words of the rituals. Ben thought that Oiogir could also be among them. He searched, but could not find the Oroks' leader there." Sitting cross-legged around the fire places on floor mats were Members of the Cosmic Assembly. They must have been

previously trained in sitting cross-legged, for the Europeans or the Americans are unable to adopt this mode of sitting within a few minutes. "I wish they had given me time to work on the report", - said Ben, trying to concentrate on what he was going to say.

For one moment the Shaman looked out of the aircraft window and pulled at Ben's sleeve.

-See, down below is our Engdekit, why don't we get off here?

-No, Oigir, - said Benjamin, - we can get off only at an airport.

Oigir looked at Benjamin with mistrust, then addressed the stewardess:

-Dear girl, the Orok wants to alight here, to go to his country, down below is our river, Mokchokit, my tabernacle, my girls, the deer, the air...

-It is impossible, in twenty minutes the plane will land, and you will go to your tabernacle.

Benjamin got sobered for a moment, where was he going with this primitive man, why did he submit to the will of this Siberian? Finally, what is the matter with him?

-Ben, Benjamin, you see, we are going down. But I am afraid that the spirits will not obey me any more for dealing with alien spirits and gods.

-On the contrary, they will respect you, - said Benjamin.

-No, the spirits of my country dislike the Evenks living in those moscovs.

-Why?

-Because under their feet there is no ground.

-You will now put your foot on your ground and feel the strength of the spirits.

-Yes, Ben, no Benjamin, you are as mighty as Ben. This is the city of the Tungus. I don't like the city, it spoils people. My sons live in this city. The city spoiled them. My elder son's gone crazy, looking for adventures, looking for General Kolchak's hidden gold all over Siberia.

-Don't the boys visit home?

-No, they don't like it. They have grown on deer's milk, now are squeamish of the deer, of the manure, of sledges. They all abandoned our beautiful Evenk girls to marry the Russian girls, their children don't know Orok, they speak Russian. I say, let them come for the Summer vacation, come to the nature, to the Taiga, become real men. No, the Russian wife won't let them. But when I come to visit them, they say, why haven't you brought deer meat?

They reached the river without any adventures. From a tabernacle neighboring on the Oiogir's home ground, they got skis and headed there. For one moment the Shaman noticed some traces, covering his mouth with his palm, he murmured something for a long time. It seemed to Benjamin that a whole brass band was warming up before a concert. Then he strained himself for a response. Similar murmurs were heard from many directions.

-Are the hunters responding to your calls? - asked Benjamin.

-What hunters, dear Benjamin, - laughingly answered the Shaman, - this is the Taiga, go a hundred kilometers in any direction, you will not come across a single soul. -I proudly tell you that I am talking to the deer. I can call them, they will come at once. I just told them I was here.

-My uncle also spoke to the animals in the forest, - said Benjamin

-Is he alive?

No, he fell from a date tree and cut his neck with a sharp stone.

-So, dates grow in your country? It is a good country.

-There is also a bad side to it.

-What is it?

-The Turk loves our country, too.

-Oh, yes, it is not so easy to get rid of them. The Evenks escaped to the Taiga from them.

-Isn't it difficult to do hunting in the Taiga? - asked Benjamin.

-The language of the Taiga is extremely difficult for those who ignore it, even dangerous.

-It is interesting.

-Two people were doing illegitimate hunting in the Taiga. They worked in the mines.

-Oroks?

-No, outsiders. The Oroks know the Taiga language. The Taiga does not forgive one hunting with no permission by the soul. They mercilessly slaughtered five cubs of the bear, after two days, when their shift at the mine was ended; they came with sharp knives to flay the cubs for their skins. Meanwhile, the cubs' father and mother ambushed them, knowing for sure that the hour of reckoning would come. Everything happened so rapidly that the poachers did not even have time to aim their guns at the bears. In a few days the workers of the mine found their decapitated bodies. -The Shaman fell silent, then continued, - I was young, but on that occasion I performed a ritual service and swore to the spirits that we should worship the bear, for he, according to our forefathers, has been our predecessor, and I also pledged to re-establish the Festival of the Bear.

-I remember something. Some praying images. There were many people who voted in favor of the Shaman – Arakoona, aia, arakoona, aia..., he'hey, he'hey...

-A ritual. Strange. You and Ben have the same soul. Now I am quite sure that there is nothing accidental in this world..

-I did not want to come, but they brought me.

-The spirit brought you, - said Oiogir, - that means you have a special mission. Do what the spirit will prompt.

-But how shall I distinguish between my own thoughts and the dictate of the spirits?

-You must have long ago been familiar with the voice of the soul, if you cannot do that, you are lost. Ben told that you had seen war, massacres, and stayed alive, because you had always listened to your inner voice, and in the most crucial moments you were upheld and supported by the spirits.

-The angels.

-It is the same, -said Oiogir, - now we are approaching our deer station. There is a need to check the winter preparedness.



It has been a week since they have not gone out of the enclosure.

A huge hound dog jumped in front of them.

-Khoopto, is that you, - said the Shaman to the dog, meet Benjamin. -Patted the dog's back, - you guarded the herd well, there were no losses, were there?

The herdsman came out of the tent.

-Momol, how are you? -Turned up to Benjamin, - in the 1930s my grandfather had huge herds, had to submit all to the collective farm, lest they should stigmatize him as a koolak, so they appointed him the brigade chief. In this way the whole herd remained in my possession. In the 50-s the spirits of our Shaman Delichi entered me. He was my teacher. Like a deer after a big chunk of salt, so I used to hang around him every day. I have taken from him lessons for both life and spirits. Of course, a herd of deer like that was of great concern to me, but I do not want to earn my daily bread by shamanism. I have no herdsman, therefore I am making my herd thinner little by little. - Became a herds boy, - what is it, Momol?

-The wolves have been surveying our station. I think they are up to something.

-OK, don't worry, I will do something. I will leave signs lest they cross the borders.

-I have tried it, doesn't help, the wolves grow bolder. I am sure you will not come any more

-If they go beyond the measures, I will punish them, - said Oiogir and went out rapidly.

He came back in half-an-hour.

-Now take the herd, let them eat leaves in the Taiga.

Ben has always feared to be trampled by herds. But when thousands of deer start running from one place, one must know the language of the herd to avoid being squashed. Oiogir seemed to never think about that. He knew all the animals, every one of them. The end of a rope thrown at the deer was fitted on the antlers, pulled with a very precise movement, landing the huge animal, and sawing off the antlers with a saw.

-When too many antlers are gathered, I take them to the city for stockpiling. Meat is also stockpiled. Well, I don't want to wear you out, let us go home. My girls have cried out their eyes.

Again they put on skis and hurried towards the tent of the Shaman's ritual exhibition, being also home to his daughters. The girls hearing the native voice, rushed out of the tent. They spoke about the disappearance of Ben, pointing to the skies. Oigir pointed at Benjamin. The girls only now turned their attention to the visitor, examined him very carefully, giggled and ran to the tent. Benjamin did not quite see, whether they took to him or, compared him to Ben and decided to dump him. Benjamin noticed that all the five girls were pregnant, and assumed that Ben had been working there very seriously. Taking a note of Ben's concern, Oigir said:

-Benjamin, I don't know, Ben's children, are they also your children or not?

-If I feel the call of blood, then they are mine. We are one soul, different bodies.

-But those bodies are very much alike.

-The girls haven't seen Ben in me.

-A woman's sense cannot be cheated. They got it at once. Besides, Ben had told them about you.

Ben noticed that girls from neighboring tents were laughing and giggling, filling their warm and smoky living quarters with glee.

From inside a giant tabernacle Ben heard a familiar voice. He looked in. Sitting at a little round table was Srbik, a known black magician.

-Benjamin, what are you doing here?

-Nothing, I was just passing by, wanted to see what is going on.

-In the Tundra? Yes, I also believed.

-What are you doing here? Maybe you intend to discover the black books in the tabernacles?

-I tell fortunes.

-What are you guessing?

-The fates of empires, the world politics are decided by me.

-You don't say so.

-Yep...I have sent onion heads to presidents and kings of different countries so that they be dazed and I could tell fortunes.

-With onions?

-Well, they must grow them and bring them to my tent in their hands. Haven't you read the legend at the entrance?

-No, I didn't pay attention.

-It was your mistake. A person coming to such a place must be very attentive.

-I will read it on exit.

-Don't take extra trouble. There is a picture of an onion head and the legend reads: "The Fate of the World".

-Why is onion associated with the fate of the world?

-It is a small model of the Globe. I crush the folds and do the guessing.

-On the onion, Srbik?

-Sure, a famous author has written a book about this type of fortune telling.

-Do you know that author?

-I don't give a damn...He has written it once, and that's it. Now presidents and kings are queuing up. Every one of them has an appointed hour. They come every hour.

-Whose turn is it now?

-The former President of the United States. I rejected. If I receive him out of turn, the others will take offense. The new president is coming in a few minutes.

-US?

-Who else? It seems a chopper landed. Besides, I have advisers, they make appointments of hours and dates to those visitors.

-Is it also their matter to decide the political guessing?

-This type of issues is the business of analytical Institutes. They outline the situations and predictions, while I mainly receive my predictions from outer space.

-From outer space?

-I have a direct connection. That is to say, they have chosen me.

-Why have they chosen you?

-Search me. It is their business. Had they chosen you, what would you do, you wouldn't be able to say no. I am only an intermediary. Here I predict that the Basks will conquer France and Spain, although the world will not recognize their independence.

-What can you say about the Ooigoors?

-Who are those?

-Very much like the Turks, living in Tibet, China.

-The Chinese will butcher, but that will be their defeat. See, in the dregs of the cup there is the letter "U" in Armenian, next there are two O-s.

-Why?

-The Turks massacred the Armenians, seized their territories, but they are defeated by the Armenians.

-Haven't you seen the fate of Armenia and Artsakh?

-No, I don't go into tiny issues.

-Why?

-Their presidents don't have that money.

-Does Lavey help you in matters of guessing?

-The poor dog has died, how can he help? -Srbik looked at Ben inquisitively, - is there Satan in you, have you pushed him off, or no?

-Oh, I am like his own house, when he wishes he comes, and he goes at will.

-There is nothing in asking.

-Not at all, it is as if that "home" has nothing to do with me. He takes me wherever he wants.

-Was it he who brought you here?

-Who else? About your onion fortune telling, I have written a book about it.

-Wow!

-In the Soviet years there were no onions in town, there was an onion hunger, but I was writing a book about the fortune tellers. And I have invented the guessing on the folds of the

onions. Thus, the main character of the book sits the girls upon his knees and starts guessing.

-Indeed, did you sit them on your knees?

-No, I am telling you about the character in the book.

Of course, before you try it out, what can you write? Well, now, from my fee as an author, I have to earmark your share.

-Sure, if the question is about the copyright..., said Ben. Surprised at this turn of events, but in doubt, whether any Armenian under conditions of widespread demoralization would do such a thing.

-Well, I will instruct my financial director to tackle this issue.

-It would be good to close an agreement with Benjamin.

-I don't see it. Aren't you Benjamin?

-Well... after that case...we have become two.

-By the way, it seems to me that all participants of this Assembly are bifurcated, like you.

-The Chairmen are bifurcated, too.

-Quite likely.

-What about you, Srbik?

-Oh, don't ask questions like that. Well, Ben, the US President is coming.

Enter the new US President.

-Good day, - he said in Armenian, putting an onion seedling on the table. It seems, the Armenians are coming to the foreground these days with regard to the future of my country.

Srbik examined the onion very carefully, measured the sprouts.

-Your country is threatened with an inside collapse, said Srbik.

-Did you say inside?

-Yes, but the model of the Globe shows three ways to salvation.

-What are they?

-You know them yourself. Think of them. I will open the folds, then I will tell you, which one it is. The second one is the right way to salvation.

-But it is dependent on other countries,.,

-No country now can act alone. Europe, China, Russia must take part, otherwise nothing will come out. Or else, all together must arrange the affairs of mankind. It doesn't look good when one is well off, and the others bad or indeterminate.

-What about the third way? - asked the President.

-It will produce a provisional solution, but will have an inherent error.

-Which one is the error?

-I don't know, the thing that I can do is to state that it is an error. A probable thing is a financial crash.

-Well, that is our bad luck. What will I have to face as interference factors?

-You have a charm in your house.

-Will you come and get it?

-If you want it, I will.

The President just noticed Ben.

-I should like to talk privately, - he said.

Ben went out, thinking, oh, this is the way the fates of the nations are resolved. This is the reason why big countries have strange gaps in their policies, what they are, and how they bring those countries to destruction. They convene assemblies, discuss serious problems, adopt resolutions, while one person renowned as a fortune teller will determine occasional paths of development for different countries, and in a few years' time one could see that a huge country would collapse without firing a single shot.

Ben noticed that The numerous chimneys of the giant tabernacle as if agreed, pushed back the smoke rising from scores of bonfires. People started to cough, pushing back the smoke with the movements of their hands.

-What are we to do, man, it is a disgrace, - said a suddenly emerging tall man with a thin face, who had probably been among the organizers of the Assembly, - it would be good at least to know how to set things right.

-I know someone who could remove the smoke, said Ben.

-Who is it, where is he? I'll get him here, no matter what it takes.

-The Chief Shaman of the Oroks, - said Ben, - but he will have to be persuaded.

-But how can he remove the smoke?

-He talks to the spirits.

-We have connected air-intake equipment, nothing helps. Air is not taken in, as if under magic.

-You can send a chopper for him. Let us ask him to do the ritual. Let him bring his girls, too.

-Could you go and call him?

-No, it is not very convenient. Better call him in my name.

At that moment there came the voice of a public address system inviting the Members of the Universal Assembly to the Central Hall.

At all assemblies Ben saw the same type of an oval table, with the difference that the smoke never reached the chimney but gathered under the ceiling of the tent, became dense filling people's eyes and lungs. The chairman gave a muted cough into the microphone, to show that his situation is not better than everybody else's.

-Ladies and gentlemen, we have tried while inviting participants to this Assembly to embrace all stakeholders, since the discussion will go around the cosmic, problems, global, at the very least, confronting the human civilization. Before convening this Assembly we have delegated people to different countries, charging them to record their direct impressions in special digital notebooks that you have been following upon your mobile screens. Is it possible that a question will arise, and the Assembly would go into discussing the human everyday life? The Assembly is named "Cosmic" and has been convened not only to discuss the cosmic issues, to be followed by appropriate resolutions, but also to see ourselves as inherent parts of cosmic space. I want to present a surprise to this Assembly, seeing that you look a little bored...

-Can you see our faces in this widespread smoke? - pronounced someone from the audience.

-I cannot disagree with your displeasure, said the Chair, whose face remained unexposed to Ben because of the smoke. The Chairman went on; - nevertheless, we have to begin our session, since our time is limited. The surprise I had in store for you will be presented to you by Ben, whom you all know very well. Please, - said the Chairman, without however providing Ben with an opportunity to speak because of his endless coughing. After a long fit of coughing, Ben started his speech:

-I am sorry, Gentlemen, Dear Chairman, I have told the Assembly host the name of the man who can open the chimneys momentarily using his magic. He is the Chef Shaman of the Oroks Oiogir, whom you have seen using your computer displays.

-Yes, let him come. We have made a mistake not to have invited the Great Shaman Oiogir. The invited Shamans in fact came out dirty. Ben, you start reporting, lest the agenda should be violated.

-OK, - said Ben, after a little coughing starting to dispel the smoke with the file of papers that he had in front of him.

-Ha, ha, ha... laughed the Chair, - the villagers of your Haterk of Karabakh came out against fog with pitchforks and clubs..., but you are not from Haterk, are you?

-I am from Metsshen.

-Yes, it is known, as you wrote: the follower of the Kimmers.

-You have to say Kiumer, - corrected Ben, - but it is not important. If this is a Cosmic Assembly, then let us talk about the distribution of cosmic energy to us, although I do not negate that the destiny of the Orok is not less important for the Universe, their numbers are dwindling. This group of people with their centuries-old culture is being eliminated. The global development swallows it, grinds it and mixes it all. However, what I want to do now is to speak about my Siberian findings, if, of course, the Chair does not mind.

-No, - said the Chair through the coughing, - I don't mind.

At this moment a group of people approached the members of Assembly. They said they were sorry, someone kindled a campfire in the middle of the circular plot on the oval table, so



that the smoke became unbearable. The smiling man next to Ben said to him:

-It looks as if there is a kind of wood in the Taiga that can emit poisonous smoke. That will do us in.

Very soon there were the sounds of tambourine and Oigir with his daughters' bellies, and guilty smiles on their faces walked around the oval table. The way Oigir felt Ben's presence amidst the puffs of smoke, is not easy to tell. He said:

-Enket poode peie evki boode.

-Whoever is not supposed to die will not die, - explained Ben.

-I say this about Ben choking in smoke, and I am going to save him and his comrades from the choking fumes, since I know that our spirits have blocked the chimneys, - said the Shaman, - you had to start your Assembly with a prayer aimed at our spirits. Are you Christians or not, how can you start an assembly without a prayer? Meanwhile, here it is the realm of our spirits. That is the thing that Ben had informed you about. But if he has forgotten about it, the spirits have nonetheless not forgiven him that and blocked the chimneys.

Meanwhile, the spirits will influence the Members of the Assembly, so that the closing of the chimneys was chosen as a convenient way of reminding about it, thought Ben,- but how they closed them remains unclear.

With a rapid motion Oigir appeared near the campfire and started to conduct the ritual. He started the ritual with the Endekit's sources, searched and found the spirit Mookhoon under the ashes, asked to allow the opening of the chimneys. Oigir's movements were so precise and expressive that the Assembly Members were impulsively following his ritual dancing and singing. Oigir blowing into a long bamboo pipe reached the chimney by gradually raising the end. It is interesting that before the eyes of the Assemblers the clouds of smoke started to move towards the chimney to be promptly drawn out. Then the Shaman's daughters each one with a tambourine in her hands, started spinning around the fire and with the rhythmic strokes to ask the spirits for the children being formed in their wombs.

Then Oigir took turns in approaching the tents positioned in the fire and in the same manner opened the way to the chimney for the smoke. It seemed that the smoke just forgot that it had to go out through the chimney and accumulated inside the tent. For the Assemblers this miracle seemed improbable, although everything had taken place before their own eyes.

After the ritual, Oiogir and his daughters surrounded Ben. They were asking him to go home with them after the meeting to be a father to his children

-Ben, if it is your Ashkhen who is the obstacle, then come with her, we shall receive her with love and care, - said Ogdoo.

-This type of action must be done by Benjamin, - answered Ben, - I am not my own boss, since I belong to the cosmic spirits. If they permit, I will come with pleasure.

-Benjamin is now with us,

-Is he, - asked Ben with surprise, it was unexpected, - what is he doing here?

-He provides treatment to barren women.

-Cool bananas!

Eventually, Ben saw the faces of the partakers. He knew many of them, since he had met them at previous Assemblies. They had been members of different International governments. A special place among them was occupied by the members of the Organization MJ-12, they looked at everything from above, and the appearance of the Oroks was regarded by them as an outrage.

## CHAPTER 15

### OROEKA

Dear Members of the Assembly, - sounded the Chair, - let me in your name express gratitude to the Great Shaman Oiogir who in this little showdown subdued the most developed contemporary technology by means of a ritual which is

thousands of years old, and cleaned the air by magic. It can be seen that the spirits have found ways of affecting our Assembly and making themselves the center of attention by closing the chimneys. But how they did it, perhaps remains a mystery for today's technology. Well, live and learn! We have once again felt the style and meaning of traditions. Special thanks are to be directed to Ben, while asking him to go on with his report.

-Thank you, Mr. Chairman, by virtue of the smoke I had an opportunity to gain time and to think about what I was going to say. I made a decision to speak on the cosmic bioenergy. This idea was prompted to me at the time of my Siberian observations. I have found that towards our planet the cosmic bioenergy is not distributed evenly all over the planet, but rather as a beam directed to selected areas. Evidently, that is done with regard to the capacity of the specific society to receive that bioenergy. Of course, sometimes experimentally, they can send a beam to an unprepared area, resulting in the population experiencing some difficulties. Having traced the history of development of human civilization, it is possible to say that this bioenergy had first been sent to the area in South-West Africa populated by proto-humans. It was this bioenergy that was the signal that a hundred thousand years ago that area was the starting point of the great migration towards the North. For the contemporary civilization the first beam was sent seven thousand years ago towards the area of the lakes Urmia and Van, populated by the Greeks, the Armenians and the Persians. Regrettably, very little has reached us from that civilization. Nevertheless, they do exist, including the Quarahoonj, or Mighty Stones in Siunik. One part of this culture was carried to the area of Great Britain, that reached us in the form of the generally known Stone Henge, as well as in the names of England and Great Britain. Later the beam of bioenergy started to go from one area to another. A giant beam must have illuminated North-East Africa, where there was a rapid development of Egypt, then the beam was directed to an area in China, then India. The bioenergetic beam, having finished its business in Egypt, went over in the Eastern direction, activating Mesopotamia and

Asyria, then going back to illuminate the Balkan Peninsula and the Apennines, Asia Minor, where the Second Rome was established. Those civilizations succeeded one another. The countries of the region assimilated the technical progress. Then there followed sort of an original experiment. Having possibly noticed an excessive overcrowding, the beam was directed at Middle Asia, Mongolia and Mountainous Altai. It seemed that the humanity had gone ahead of the pre-planned objective, and a mighty force was needed to push it back by five hundred years. The Turks, having received that energy, rather than thinking about making prosperous their own country, moved Westward, trampling the Middle-Asian countries – Iran, Armenia and Byzantium. Meanwhile, the Mongols invaded the areas between China and India to Europe. The Cosmic Beam appeared in the Americas, helping the Inkas, the Aztecs, and the Mayans to sort of prepare a good feast for the Spanish plunderers. Let today's Spaniards excuse me, but their forefathers destroyed those civilizations. The Cosmic Bioenergy Beam started to go around in Europe. England started to rule the whole world, the same kind of domination was being sought by Spain, France and the Netherlands. to distribute that enormous force among different nations. In Russia it was converted to revolution. Germany, starting to feel its enormous potential, assaulted its neighbors, initiating a world war. The Cosmic Beam again reached America and Japan.

-And where is that beam now, -asked a tall man with thick moustache unfit for his slim face, - why don't we see it?

-You know that it is moving Eastwards, - answered Ben, - it is the turn of the Chinese, perhaps, then it may be South America and then Africa. To be worthy of the Beam, one has to be ready, lest the cases with the Turks and the Mongols could recur. They can only spread massacres.

-What do you mean?

-Genocides of the Armenians, the Greeks, the Assyrians, the complete obliteration of the cultures of the fifty nations of Asia Minor.

-What can you say with regard to Britain?

-It was correctly calculated and was based upon the global interests of mankind. I have in mind the development of the colonized countries and their independent existence.

-What about the bioenergetic beam, can it return to its formerly attended places?

-Until now nothing has been registered. Three and a half thousand years ago only one part of China was illuminated. The beam is not guided by political borderlines. It seems, those in space get a signal from a specific area, analyze it and only then send a beam in that direction.

-We have seen that you have links with the Shamans, you have saved us from being choked with smoke through spirits. We appreciate that. What about the Outer Space, do you have connections there?

-I think that each person has capabilities to form a link with the forces of Space.

What do you mean?

-Only one hemisphere of man's brain is operational. The time will come and the other hemisphere will get connected, the link will be opened automatically, said Ben. -That has been given to man not quite in vain.

During one month again there was a feminine invasion at the Shaman's station. New tabernacles have been added. Sterile women were coming from all quarters. It was unmarried virgins, even those who thought that it was all the same, because there was no hope of finding a proper man. They also associated their expectations with the Great Shaman, who could provide the magic.

Benjamin at the very start complained to the Shaman that he was not a medic at all, particularly having no idea about infertility or its treatment, however, the Shaman persuaded him that the important thing is what the woman believes. If you can make her concentrate, then no close tubes will be able to resist that mighty force. He was trying to do so that Benjamin would provide seed to them. So, under the Siberian cold, Benjamin had nothing to do but to submit to the will of those women.

Evenk women were dancing naked in the middle of the tabernacle around a camp fire, while one of them, sitting astride on Benjamin, was moving and moaning in time with the now accelerating, now slowing down strokes of the tambourine.

Benjamin heard a familiar din. He peeped outside the leather-drawn tabernacle. It was a sunny morning, while he was in a smoky tent like a prisoner. The women pulled him back.

-You are not allowed to look outside, - said a fat-bodied girl pulling Benjamin to herself.

-I hear a chopper, - said Benjamin, turning his ear to the noise outside.

-That does not concern us, -said one of the girls, - they could have come to take away the deer meat. The leader of our area likes delicatessen.

Benjamin found a moment to have a look again. Two police officers were arguing with Oiogir demanding something of him. They walked towards the tabernacle. At that moment Temoo entered in panic.

-Girls, be quiet, - she turned to Benjamin, - they came for you, want to take you away.

-By no means, - said the fat girl, - we shall give our man to no one.

They rapidly covered Benjamin with a thick mat serving as a blanket, and sat all around, so that he could not even move under the cover. The policemen came in, looking around, then came out having found nothing suspicious. Ben pushed with his legs opening a gap between two slim Orokians and slipping out and not finding his clothes, swiftly put on some woman's skirt and jumped out of the tent. It was so rapid that the girls could not stop Benjamin's flight in time.

He approached the policemen and said:

-I am Benjamin.

The policemen looked at him and his clothes with uncertainty.

-No, no, see her skirt, the real Tungus.

-Have a look at the face, Kostia, he does not look like a Tungus, said the policeman.

-Well Dim, don't invent things.

-But you have a look at the face, it is a face of a man from the Caucasus, insisted the policeman, coming up, well, say again, who are you?

-Benjamin, from Yerevan.

-You are wanted by the police.

-On what occasion? -asked Benjamin.

-I think you are wanted in connection with an evidence in court for your son.

-What is the day of the trial?

-I don't know. They must be waiting for you. What are you doing in this area?

-It's a long story.

-Abduction, hostage? We can draw up a report and call them to account.

-No, no, what do you say, I came on my own will, to make a study of the local life.

-But what were you doing in the tent with naked girls?

-Recording songs and conversations.

-Your song writing was not too evident. You have opened a night club and are corrupting these people who have no idea of the world. Well, dress yourself, we are leaving in five minutes. You are on the WANTED list.

-You come, too, so that I find the clothes.

When they came in, the fat girl addressed the policemen:

-We shall pay what is due. won't you allow him to stay two hours more with us?

-It depends on what your payment is going to be.

-Temoo, - said the fat girl, - give an instruction to kill a young deer and to load it on the chopper.

-Not too much for two hours, said the policeman, - it is a big risk, if a wind is started, we will be stuck here for a month, while the chopper will cost five thousand bucks an hour.

-We have nothing else to offer you, -said Temoo, putting her palm on her rounded belly.

-The matter is not about you, said the policeman looking at the rounded belly of Temoo, - but then, he said addressing the fat girl, - what is this man going to do for two hours?

-Two hours, for you it may be a problem, but he can work without an interval from morning to night.

-You don't say so, where did you get this wonder from?

-He came by himself, or rather it was our spirits that brought him.

-Is it possible that all those pregnancies are his business? - asked the policeman,

-Could it be yours?

-Orok's faces will be of Caucasian nationality, no one will believe that your children are the Oroks.

-It is not yet clear, what faces are going to be given them by our souls.

Benjamin came out of the tabernacle in his habitual clothes. They were approached by Oiogir.

-I heard you were leaving, he said.

-Believe me, Oiogir, it is not my wish now to go back to Yerevan.

-Why?

-When I see my unimplemented books in the office, it breaks my heart . No readers any more. Literature is expiring. You know, when people do not worship God, his luster will subside. The same with a writer, when his books are unread, both the writer and literature will die, as well as morality.

-Therefore, don't write any more.

But what shall I do?

-Come and keep deer.

-Well, when the trial of my son ends, I will come back. There are still a lot of things to do here.

-Come back and father your sons, - said the Shaman.

-No, if he teaches, he will teach reading and writing to all, and they will resettle in other worlds, - said Ogdoo, - but we need the real Oroks.

-It is not right, Ogdoo, what we need is to bring the civilization here, answered Benjamin, - while our mode of life



has to be adapted to the contemporary civilization. It is coming all the same. I will come back and we shall do it together.

-What can we do, Benjamin, for us what remains is to wait for your return, - hearing the noise of the helicopter and feeling the air pressure coming from the blades, said Oiogir, - if you meet Ben, tell him we remember him.

From the chopper window Benjamin saw the Chief Shaman Oiogir and the Orok men and women diminish gradually in size with their herds of deer in the overwhelming whiteness to become black dots.

Ben, thinking that his business was finished, under the inner and unexplained push got out of the huge tent. He had no idea as to where he had to go. Stormy wind attacked his face. "Whoever brought, let him take away", - he thought. However why should he always choose the way of life full of trouble and difficult situations instead of the quiet life full of pleasures? When hesitating and intending to go back to the tabernacle, a familiar person from the snow dust showed something like a friendly smile. That one was now hidden in the blizzard, now peeping out again. Ashkhen, Lord God, Ashkhen, what is she doing in this frozen world, thought Ben walking towards her. -So, she was in the tent, and she was not attentive, now she is offended and fleeing him, or maybe taking him to another place.

But if her smile is an illusion, that is the means for Siberian spirits to seduce her and to bring her to destruction, for only they know her weakness, and how to cheat her. At that moment someone called from behind: "Hello, where are you, Ben? Where are you going, you will be lost in the taiga! Ben stopped and looked back. Who was that? Maybe Ogiö.

Of course, who else could have been concerned for him? If I stay alive, I must come back to see them, - thought Ben. Some inner force pulled him towards Ashkhen's smile, to the blizzard and to his fate, it was a challenge from either nature or the devil. Completely buried under a thick layer of snow, Ben struggled to pave the way to the snow-driven smile of Ashkhen. However, the more he was trying to get close, it seemed he was there, the further he get away from it. Even Ben thought that it was a

skeptic smile, but anyway it was not Ashkhen's. Of course, the spirits here knew how to mislead him. Not far away there was a long and sharp howl of a wolf. An impression was that the howl was from within him. Someone in him was calling the wolves. The Devil? Did he want to do him in? He did not like his presentation at the Cosmic Assembly. Of course, no devil could forgive him those steps, to address God on so many occasions. Ben knew that the devil wanted him to die a brutal death. If not him, some other person could be used to settle in, for the devil there is no difference. Indeed, in a short while he saw the wolves' mugs all around him. Perhaps they were displeased that people were driving them off their last refuge, the Tundra, and wanted to revenge. Or rather, it was he who came about, or the devil gave him in. However, there could have also been the Shaman Oiogir coming, he would make a show for the wolves and a ritual round dance.

But there was no Shaman.

He took his daughters, left the Cosmic Assembly so alien to him, which was, to his mind, another hazard to his dwindling nation melting within the civilization.

Ben felt that the chain around him was shrinking.

The wolves were on the point of charging.

Ben decided to yield, not to resist.

He was part of them.

At that moment Ben felt a strange lightness.

He knew that there would always come up a force that would take him out of that situation.

At the same time he was sorry that he would not feel the merging with nature, the pleasure of becoming its fodder.

Once he made one of his literary characters be eaten by the wolves, thus dedicating him to nature.

As if some force at that moment tore him off the wolves' countless jaws lifting him up. No, rather he got so much lighter that he leaped up into the air like an air balloon. It seemed that the wolves knew that it was to be so, they were looking for something at the place where he had been standing. Then Ben saw that in his place there were guzzling a huge deer. What

that offering was for, Ben could not understand. Someone's gaze was burning him inside gyri of his brain. It was easy to see why it got there at all. He turned back. Not far it was Ashkhen who was smiling at him.

-Where are we going, - asked Ben

-to Vachakan.

-You mean King?

-Yes, he wants to see you, has something to tell you.

-But do we have the right to change the past?

-Neither can we do a thing like that, - said Ashkhen, - just he has something to tell the generations.

-Let him tell it to Benjamin, he is the writer, not me. You have a connection with him now, haven't you?

-Yes, but Benjamin does not like to go into the past. You will appear in the past, will register, get informed, while Benjamin will explore everything and will record it.

-Is he going to write an historic novel?

-Yes, he is already writing.

-Let him write, I have nothing to do with it.

-He wants to go to the sixth century. Without your help nothing will come out.

-And how is it going with our boy?

-There are some complications. Now Gagik Afaryan is putting pressure on him.

-Who is that?

-You must remember, at the time of the Karabakh Movement there was one at the side of the leader, managing financial affairs.

-It becomes clear that the Republic has a shadow President.

-Has Kojgo appeared again?

-No, what Kojgo, the times have changed. He has no seat of his own yet. He is based at an unknown cafe, drinking tea, receiving people from different places at the same cafe, listening to them, giving promises.

- Anyway Benjamin has jumped at their bait.

-Yes, at the latest court session he accidentally met Benjamin, promised him to bring him home from the court, and demanded five thousand dollars.

-Benjamin has no money like that.

-He borrowed it. You know, you can do anything for your own son.

-For a father it is a weak moment.

-But the judge gave him one year. Benjamin wants the dough back.

-Gagik will not refund the money, - I know him. He is sitting in a cafe.

-You know everything.

-No, this is an assumption.

-Gagik promised to refund, but threatened a year in jail for Hovik.

-He can do it.

-Under the new conditions it is not clear what kind of support can this shadow President enjoy.

-He has no support at all.

-He is attended by some representatives of satanic organizations.

-That complicates the matter.

-Ben wants you to come back and help, for he is at a loss.

-That is another proof that our tribe are strangers.

-That is...

-It is connected with the birth of mankind. One part are the locals, the others are newcomers, or arrivals from space.

-Which of them is you?

-Judging by Benjamin's helplessness and difficult orientation, one can assume that we are the aliens. They are gifted, can write books, do creative work, but in everyday life they get their bearings with difficulty.

-What about me and my mother? if we look at Kojgo, then we are locals, despite the admixtures.

-My God, it is so difficult to live in this world. What about our novel, Ashkhen? The writing was about the Ben's devil, wasn't it?

-It is nearing the end. Perhaps these cases create pretexts to be filled in.

-Lord God... Ashkhen, own up, is Benjamin for you an adequate substitute for me?

Oh, my God, in this cold Siberia, hanging in the air, you will start a scene of jealousy? Vazgen has found something.

-Yes, he has given gadget for recording the office voices. All rumors...

-You have no right to listen to rumors.

-Now all the world is eavesdropping. The new technology has entered everyday life, and all people have become spies.

-All the same, I will not forgive either you or Vazgen. All people are mean

-You have changed a lot, Ashkhen.

-You left me to the will of fortune.

-Lord God...

Down below is the Russian endless wild grassland. Marshland everywhere. It can be seen that ten thousand years ago the traces of glaciers sliding from the Northern Ocean towards the South have not yet dried up. It can be seen that two thousand years ago those people while withdrawing with the waters from the Kiyev Rusland, penetrated to the West. In the history by Movses Kaghankatvatsi in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century there is a mention of the Huns' and the Rosmosoks' joint expedition to Artsakh. That was the first mention of the Russians of Moscow, that had escaped the attention of researchers. Not a single bump on the horizon, all flat. Scientists predict a new disaster. In all cases another flood is probable. What must the Russia's population do? The haves will escape on their helicopters and planes. Scientists say that prior to the glaciation there came about an original civilization here.

The first thing that Ben did was to find Gago Aferyan. Gago was a close friend of General Mngoyan. He used to attend the "Dolphin" cafe from morning till night, also receiving visitors. Meanwhile the visitors were the people who had appeared in the claws of the country's bureaucratic and corrupted entities. Gago listened to the visitor carefully, answering that it was not a

problem, to manage the case, say, it is worth a thousand dollars, he will then haggle and make it two thousand. Gago, after receiving the suggested amount, makes a call, say, to the chief of directorate for the detention centers, asking in the name of his friend the General to prepare the son of his client for an an early release. He can call any judge, pointing out the conditions. The two corrupt managers and responsible persons know that to gain money through Gago is absolutely safe, they meet him half-way, accept what he offers most willingly. Gago in such cases tries to reduce the amount obtained by the official.

Of course, Ben had to check first if Gago was a member of any influential group, or to make inquiries of who were his sponsors beside the general. When Ben contacted the General, he in his turn complained about Gago, saying that a few days before he mimicked his voice speaking to some officials, and ordered him to settle some affair. Then the official in question had some doubts as to the general having issued such an order, and checked it out by calling the general personally. Anyway, Ben thought that Gago was leaning upon a huge system, otherwise he would not feel so free. Of course, he had to discuss those subjects at the Assembly. The moral and spiritual decline is particularly hazardous for public life. The beginning of a big decline is a crisis, a universal decay, whose engineers are acting both inside and outside. The bankruptcy of the banks outside results from the inside action of the looters. The decline of morality results in the growth of corruption and bribery, the detention centers are being filled up by people who want to live a decent life. The country's brains go behind bars. The poisoning of people's mentality has become part of the process which is now difficult to stop, and which can never be brought back to rehabilitating the moral and spiritual roots. The System today is illicitly trying to determine the public mind. It has created its own system of circulating amounts of money. Having been created in parallel with the state-owned circulation, that alternative system can interfere with the affairs of the state, can dictate its will to the state-governing bodies and to the public, if needed. This system penetrates the parties, forming its own

parties if necessary. Having accumulated potential, it can seize power at any time and appoint its own President.

Passing over Derbent, he aimed at his native Artsakh. He knew that his place of birth, the native Margushavan, is occupied. With the help of Google, he found his village and his house. It was burnt down, it lay in ruins, the surrounding trees were cut off. It was like a deliberate action so that he would lose his childhood and all memory of the young years, all threads of memory tied to homeland, mother, next of kin. Then he made a search of Vano Grigoryan, the teacher of mathematics. Angela was jumping over the benches, and Vano called her a doe, everybody liked it. She saw a Turk boy during the lesson, who was quietly walking towards the road to the Tartar.

-Turk, Turk, - shouted Benjamin, and the whole school thronged the street. The Turkish boy fled in terror, was lost from sight. A few days ago, his friend Shahe and he went to the river Tartar. Coming back, two Turk boys meeting them started to throw stones at them. Then adults, too, joined the children attacking them with stones. From the Tartar Bazar to Maragha, three kilometers, the eight-year old boys were driven out of breath. However, the real clashes were at the days of the football matches. After a game in Margushevan there was a feast and the parties separated peacefully, but before the second leg the team got ready for combat. It was inevitable, all the more so after they won. However, the boys never gave in, although before the game started a party representative from Mirbashir would approach, to ask the boys to lose lest there should peaceful outcome, decided to win at any price. Ben remembered that in the course of a winning game the mob came down on the field and there was a big scuffle. For a few years after that occasion the Tartars avoided coming to Margoshevan.

Ben slid towards Tonashen, passed Karvajar, then the ancient Tree, hung about the fountains of the hot waters, came down sharply for a moment on a fountain only to find himself in a hot jet. The heavy water made him go down. While descending,

he felt the water becoming hotter. Feeling that he could get burns, he shirked aside. He lay on valleys, he enjoyed the beautiful landscapes. One moment it seemed that he was hanging motionless, and the earth went in a zigzag motion to display new sceneries. Soon there came the city.

He decided to go to Benjamin first The square in front of the Academy of Sciences was unusually animated. Perhaps an International conference. Two women, apparently beggars, decided to ask the foreigners for money.

-There are also good ones among them, whose hand knows the way to the pocket, giving out the small change. But some are really bad, giving nothing, they think we live on their give-out, damn them.

-Where are they, I see no good men, - answered the other beggar.

-You don't say, one gave me a thousand, a handsome man. Eh, no hope. Thank God, I have married off my son.

-Damn them all, couldn't he give five thousand?

-No, girl, don't say so, I would like to see him once again...

-OK, you again talk too much. I'll go to the other end, it seems, the wealthy are there.

He entered the premises of the Foundation. Benjamin looked in his direction and said:

- Come in, you are welcome.

To Ben it was clear that he could not see him.

But the atmosphere inside was not heavy.

There was no end to the flow of thoughts.

Where is the devil?

That is how they train people: make them devils and let them go.

The devil.

He touched his head.

In-between the tufts of hair there were no bumps.

God forbid, the horns would be seen.

If people see the horns, they will kill me.

He looked at his feet.



He felt toes in his shoes.

It is curious, how the clothes become invisible.

It is strange that he can see himself, and feel the flow of thought.

Benjamin continued to press the keys. He was writing an open letter to the rich of the country, asking them to help go on with the programs of the Foundation. He was preparing himself to the idea that no wealthy man would echo his plea. They are not interested in the Foundation programs, nor the doings of the writers, nor corrections in the system of income distribution, in order to save the culture, to link it to the public life.

Benjamin finished writing the open letter and came over to the articles. He was preparing a series of articles for the "Dawn" newspaper on the decline of morality, corruption and the ways to get out of this situation.

-What will be the result of this series of articles, - asked Odet, - you know that today no one will give a damn for a newspaper article.

Benjamin kept silence for a moment. Odet was waiting for an answer. She was interested in the answer of a renowned journalist, since she was a graduate of the Media Faculty of the University.

-I agree that there will be no immediate result, I have never expected that.

-In this case why do you write?

-This is self-abuse. It is important to affect the mentality of the people. That is the role of a writer. The important thing is to change the public mentality.

-But it has been four years that you cannot get permission for the entrance to your workshop, - said Odet, - while another one in your situation would leave the country.

-Where can I go at this age?

-But you never wanted to leave even in your young years.

-I am with all my guts joined to our culture and the country, wherever I would go. There is no other country like this one.

-But the country and the people, they do not appreciate you.

-They do, but they cannot bear my adherence to principles.

-You have the role of a janitor.

-Yes, a public janitor.

-Yes, public, for it is a hard and dangerous work and you get nothing for it.

-Serves me right.

-Why?

-Because I never think about what I do. I obey to my subconscious and I trust it. It made me a writer.

-How was it, - asked Odet.

-In my student years I used to wake up nights to write down my dreams. It was real dream-hunting. The unconscious can prompt interesting solutions. I gradually learned to tie my pen to the words of thought.

-What are you writing now?

-I am about to finish a novel.

-And what happened to the film script? The one awaited by your American friend?

-As soon as I submit my novel, I will start to write the film script, since I have completed all preliminary work.

-But life is going on, - said Odet with bitterness.

-This is my *modus vivendi*, I cannot live in any other way.

-No, it will not be right.

-Why?

-Because I translate the concerns to literature. If I live without cares, I will be severed from the course of life, and my literature will be good for nothing.

-But anyway, you don't have too many readers now.

-The time will come, I will have them, be quiet.

-We shall see.

-We shall see.

-You will live long.

-Don't meddle into God's affairs.

-OK, I will not.

-Odet, I have got yet another mission. My idea is to save the story of the forefathers of my tribe from oblivion.

-It is interesting.

-That is connected with a huge nation, a nomadic people called the Kimmers. I have found it in the Tartar gorge, in its old name of Kuank-kiumank, in the old names of the Kiumers, Harutiun Kiumer, there are also other types of evidence discovered by comparative research. Academician Manandian associates the old name of the city of Giumri with those names of Kimmers.

-In that case why were they called the Kimms?

-They called themselves Kimms. They lived in the gorge Gomer-Kiumer, and perhaps what was left of that nation was the word root "Kium", that had been transferred to the people of Artsakh.

-It is possible that many roots have been preserved in the dialects of Artsakh.

-It is possible, but it has to be checked, answered Benjamin,

- Herodotes and Homer mentioned them and their dug-outs. Kings from other countries used to come to see the Kiumer fortune tellers, who never saw the light of day, and did their magic in the dark. The main income of their kings was fortune telling. The people of Artsakh inherited from the Kimmers the belligerent soul, the strength for war and victory.

-The tribe of Vachakan are also connected with the Kimmer-Kiumers.

-“Vaj” is connected with the nomads, a nomadic tribe. After the decline of the followers of Aranshah, the tribe of Vachakans was the strongest in Artsakh, therefore in the late III century the Persians entrusted them with the Albanian Kingdom.

-Why Albanian?

-To divide Armenia, especially to separate its Artsakh section, so, its weakening was convenient to the Persian state. Artsakh and Ootik merged with the river Kura’s left-bank state formed a subject state. But the representatives of Vachakan, as carriers of all-Armenian culture, showed themselves as subordinated to the Persian court, but in the reality remained loyal to the Armenian integrity. Its brightest expression was the third King off Vachakan. Well, Odet, you have caught me at my

weakest point, but I have to write an open letter to the Armenian businessmen.

-We have sent four hundred letters, some helped, at least wrote an answer.

-No one was kind enough to respond. But it is the last time. Later I will make a declaration on freezing the programs. If the society does not need our activities, the programs have to be suspended.

Ben wanted to interfere, to offer his assistance. In fact, he could apply his capabilities and make the wealthy businessmen help the Foundation. But it would not have been fair. If a society is not prepared to feel its own benefit, respecting the persons who do not give a damn to the benefits of society, then there is no use in making artificial steps or corrections.

Grandson left a little rubber ball at grandfather Benjamin's place. For the whole night Benjamin was weaving a net around the grandson's ball. Links could not get right. He made circles of different diameters from a thick white thread, then four vertical links to hold them together. The first time he made a net, then he saw that the ball does not pass into the net. He disassembled it, tried to knit it on the ball. However, each time it went wrong. It was already ten in the morning, but the net was not yet ready. Making the net, he could not have time to sleep. In this situation there is a headache all day long and the heart is funny, capacity to work and to think is lost. He thought that Sisyphus was also a writer, suffering with insomnia, like him, Half asleep he rolled a heavy cold stone up, which through a small error again rolled into the abyss. And he, like the hero of the Greek legend had to start anew each time. Benjamin thought about the god of dreams, started to reproach himself. That deity had to be tolerant towards the devil, and afford the capacity to sleep, rather than mentally weave a net around a ball. It is quite a stupid business for Benjamin to weave a net around a ball, when his grandson does not in fact need it, just like the poor Sisyphus did not have to push the heavy stone to the summit. He could have, if needed, cut off a stone and hewn it to a desired shape. But the readers in their turn, suffer along with Sisyphus, share

his failures, but never say: well, what is it for, to get the stone to the mountain top? Evidently, when the stone has reached its destination, he sat down to rest, but someone ambushed him, came up sneaking and pushed the stone back. He did not know who was destroying his woven net, but decided to weave it no more.

Ben was passing close to the “Triumph” cafe, when he remembered Gago and came in, addressing a young waiter:

-Just at this table, a customer used to sit on this chair, he received many people on different occasions.

-Gago, yes, ordering two cups of tea he occupied the table all day long.

-At what time did he come here?

-He was here from morning till night. But one day suddenly in everyone’s view he melted into the thin air and vanished. Since then we have seen him no more.

-Was there anything else that could look unusual?

-No, what else could there be?

Ben walked out of the cafe, looking up. In the blue sky there were thousands of people, flying left and right, right and down. Ben called Vazgen on his mobile.

-Vazgen, what is going on in the sky, what have you done to the Armenian people?

-I don’t know what you mean.

- Well, I am on my way.

-The secret governments are looking for you, - said Vazgen, soon Assemblies are going to be convened, all are looking for you, that you make reports.

-No Assemblies, - answered Ben, - I am returning to Siberia. In the office Benjamin was handling a cable.

-The stupid ones, those Siberians, - he mumbled.

-What is it, - asked Odet.

-Who brought the cable? - asked Benjamin.

-I don’t know, it was on the table in the morning, - answered Odet.

-They are calling Ben to Siberia, - said Benjamin.

Ben read it: “Ben, come urgently to father your children. All your wives are waiting for you. With love and faith, Oiogir”.

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